

NORTHWESTERN

February 1998

LUTHERAN

THE WORD FROM THE WELS



**Access to
the throne**

page 6

**What is
Lutheran
confirmation?**

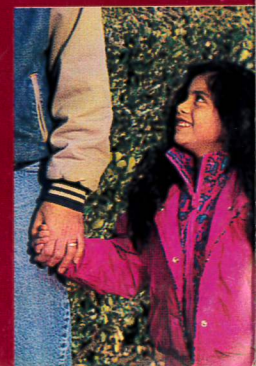
page 16

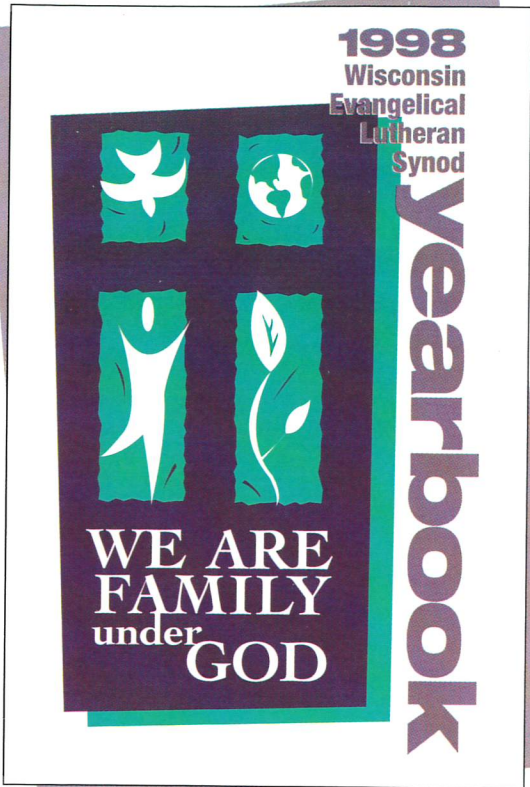
**Out of
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page 36

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Who gives you the right? page 8











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Hit the mark

Finally, brothers, good-by. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. 2 Corinthians 13:11

Eric S. Hartzell

If you aim at nothing, you'll hit it. No goals, no targets, no aspirations, and one thing is sure: nothing!

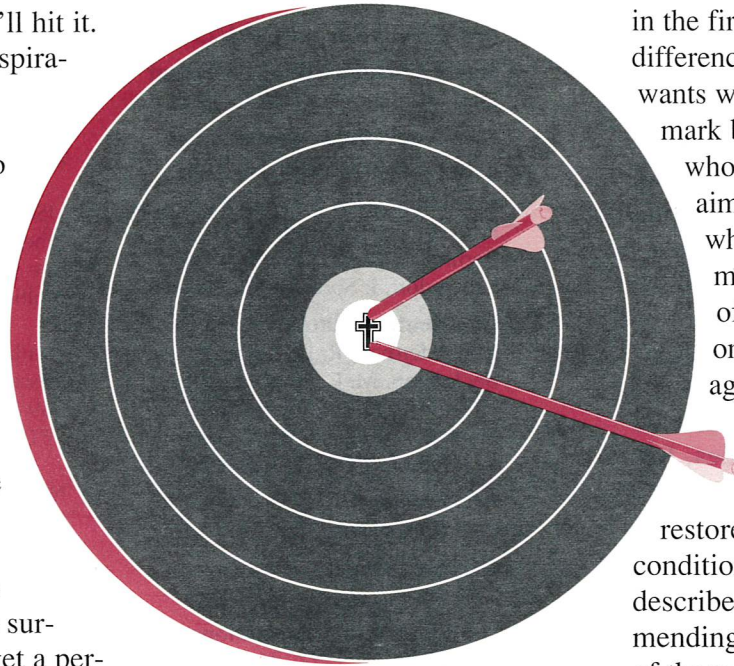
God wants you and me to aim for perfection. That's what he encourages in 2 Corinthians. The apostle Paul encouraged the Corinthian congregation to aim at perfection in their spiritual and congregational life: "Listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace."

You wouldn't criticize a marksman for aiming at the bull's-eye. You wouldn't be surprised if he were trying to get a perfect score. He might not get a perfect score, but you would expect him to try. Who would say he is arrogant and loveless if he aims at perfection? Aren't Olympians even praised for this quality?

Aiming for perfection

Our Christian (and Lutheran) fellowship practice aims at perfection. Yet there is criticism when Christians have clear standards of belief and confession they want those in their church to share. And some think it's wrong for a pastor to ask about someone's belief prior to coming to the Lord's Supper. The right way to come to the Lord's Supper isn't a matter of subjective truth. We aim for a scripturally defined bull's-eye.

How can it be in agreement with aiming for perfection to have no



rules regarding fellowship in our congregation? How can it be good to sacrifice principles to include everyone? The Lord says, "Be of one mind." He says, "Live in peace." Those wonderful things happen when we by God's grace aim for perfection. They never happen when we close our eyes and release the arrow.

The Christian says, "I aim for my knowledge of Jesus and my practice of love to be perfect. Help me to do that and to be that. Let me help you to that end in your life, too."

Jesus hit perfection

The Bible's definition of sin is "missing the mark." We admit that we sin. We admit that we miss the mark. But our missing the mark did not start from our having no mark

in the first place. There is a world of difference between someone who wants with all his heart to hit the mark but misses, and someone who takes no God-pleasing aim in the first place. Someone who never eyes God's commandments with the intention of hitting the mark is someone who is in rebellion against his command,

"Aim for perfection."

To aim for perfection means originally to restore perfectly to a working condition. The words are used to describe setting a broken bone or mending torn fishing nets. The idea of those activities is to aim for perfection.

Jesus aimed at perfection when he set out to save us. He didn't just want to get close with his life. He wanted it to be perfect. The Lord of Life demanded that it be perfect. "You shall be perfect because I the Lord your God am perfect." Our God isn't satisfied with near misses. And that is what brings us to Jesus and to the perfect perforations in the target that he made for us. He aimed for perfection, and he hit it.

Eric Hartzell is pastor at Cross and Crown, Georgetown, Texas.



- People, it seems, can never read or learn enough about how to improve their prayer life. Recognizing the interest in this issue, Wayne Mueller is writing a three-part series on prayer. But don't expect pat answers. In this series, Mueller gets to the heart of the real issues behind prayer. See his first article on page 6.
- For all the importance we place on confirmation, it is a ritual that God neither commands nor forbids. In a two-part series, John Brenner will delve into the history and practices of confirmation—and the role it plays in our lives. Turn to page 16.
- The article on Wilmer Valleskey (p. 14) ends Morton Schroeder's second series on "By faith they led." By giving us personal glimpses of our synod leaders, Schroeder expanded our knowledge of those who have guided our synod. His articles also expanded something else—our vocabulary. His ability to find just the right word often led us straight to the dictionary.
- We welcome Paul Ehlke to our NL team this month. A May '97 graduate of Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, N.Y., Paul is the new graphic designer for your magazine. We look forward to working with him.

—LRB

Cover photo by
Mrs. Kevin Scheibel Photography

NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN

Official magazine of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
February 1998 / Vol. 85, No. 2

Editorial office: *Northwestern Lutheran*, WELS, 2929 N Mayfair Road, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; FAX, 414/256-3899; <nl@sab.wels.net>

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Subscription services

1-800-662-6093 ext. 8

Milwaukee area 414/475-6600 ext. 5

Northwestern Publishing House

1250 N 113 St

Milwaukee WI 53226-3284

USA and Canada—one year \$9. All other countries—one year, air mail \$40; one year, surface mail \$24. Write for multi-year, blanket, and bundle rates.

Available on audio cassette from Mission for the Visually Impaired, 559 Humboldt Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55107.

NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN (ISSN 0029-3512) is published monthly by Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284. Periodical postage paid at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Northwestern Lutheran*, c/o Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284. ©1998 by *Northwestern Lutheran*. Printed in the USA.

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With this ring . . .
page 10



What is Lutheran confirmation?
page 16



Church through a child's eye
page 12

- 3 **THOUGHT FOR TODAY**
Hit the mark
Eric S. Hartzell
We admit that we miss the mark. But our missing the mark did not start from our having no mark in the first place.
- 6 **ASK IN JESUS' NAME**
Access to the throne
Wayne D. Mueller
More important than getting the words right is having a right heart toward God when we pray.
- 8 **FAITH LIKE A CHILD**
Who gives you the right?
John M. Parlow
When you feel uncertain and frightened as you lovingly reach out to a fellow believer caught in sin, reach up and take your heavenly Father's hand.
- 10 **MARRIAGE**
With this ring . . .
Mark R. Bitter
As you prepare to say "I do," let whatever you say and do glorify God.
- 12 **CHURCH THROUGH A CHILD'S EYE**
Picture this
- 14 **BY FAITH THEY LED**
His forte was fishing
Morton E. Schroeder
Like Peter, Andrew, James, and John, Wilmer Martin Otto ("Wim") Valleskey "fished" on land as ardently as he did in the sea.
- 16 **CONFIRMATION**
What is Lutheran confirmation?
John M. Brenner
Confirmation is meaningless if viewed apart from the instruction in God's truth given in preparation for the rite.
- 18 **PART OF GOD'S FAMILY**
Blessings behind bars
David A. Tetzlaff
Even at 92, Alf witnessed to God's grace as he accompanied prisoners while they sang hymns of praise.
- 19 **INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDY**
Inter-act
Randy K. Hunter

- 20 **WELS NEWS**
 - Life issues media campaign planned
 - Breaking barriers
 - Where are they now?
 - Keeping teens involved
 - Nurturing families
 - Pregnancy counseling center opens
- 26 **WORLD NEWS**
 - Church ranks third in public confidence
 - Alabama official seeks to block prayer ban
 - Many are attending, few are active
 - Regular attendance boosts immune systems
 - Russian church exerts minimal influence
 - Family disruption may keep Gen-Xers from church
- 28 **BULLETIN BOARD**
- 29 **PERSON TO PERSON**
Anonymous valentines
Karl R. Gurgel
Might I suggest sending a Valentine, a card of appreciation, to your pastors and teachers, thanking them for sharing with you the story of our Savior's love?
- 30 **BIBLE STUDY**
Go ahead! Be humble!
Mark E. Braun
Godly humility enables us to take ourselves off the throne of our lives, so God reigns there instead.
- 31 **EDITORIAL COMMENT**
Would you mind participating in a poll?
Walter F. Beckmann
When it comes to most moral issues and matters of Christian doctrine there are absolute truths. God has revealed them to us in his Word.
- 32 **YOUR QUESTION, PLEASE**
Death and resurrection
John F. Brug
- 33 **READERS FORUM**
- 34 **THE EDITOR'S PEN**
MOVIEGUIDE
Gary P. Baumler
Movies have degenerated at an alarming rate. Baehr has taken positive steps to counter the decline.
- 36 **INSIGHTS**
Out of control
David Danford

Access to the throne

More important than getting the words right is having a right heart toward God when we pray.

Wayne D. Mueller

Does Jesus' performance live up to his promises about prayer?

This doubt can bedevil even a seasoned Christian. When we do not get what we ask for—and when we want it—we begin to wonder whether we really understand our Savior's promises about prayer.

Jesus promises to answer prayer

The Lord's promises are crystal clear: "And I will do whatever you ask in my name . . . You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it . . . Ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you . . . the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name . . . Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete" (John 14:13,14; 15:7; 16:23,24).

The problem lies not in our Savior's promises, but in the weakness of our human flesh. Our sinful nature immediately grabs hold of the unconditional guarantee of getting anything and everything we ask for. But we conveniently skip over the context in which Jesus tells us to offer our prayer: "in my name."

Obviously, asking in Jesus' name does not mean hanging those words like a magical charm on the end of our prayers. But what does it mean?

Jesus calls for our trust

Our frustration over seemingly unanswered prayers is harmful. Doubt about God's real answers will drag us toward the secular view that prayer's only benefit is psycho-

logical reflection. Second guessing the meaning of our Savior's invitation to pray will only cast doubt on his many other promises.

When we come to the throne of God we spend too much time on the little things and way too little on the big thing.

But God provides an alternative. The spiritual nature Jesus implanted at baptism uses our flesh's frustrations as an opportunity to search out the deeper meaning of Jesus' promises. It invites in the Holy Spirit to help us understand those three little words, "in Jesus' name." What we learn not only rebuilds our confidence to pray, it renews our trust in the full face value of all of our Lord's promises.

Martin Luther put the matter in a nutshell when he wrote, "Asking in the name of Christ really means relying on Him in such a way that we are accepted and heard for His sake, not for our own sake" (*What Luther Says* [WLS], p. 1,077).

Jesus gives access to the Father

Praying in Jesus' name means many things, things we will explore in future articles. But first of all and most of all, praying in Jesus' name means access—access to the throne of God. "No one comes to the

Father except through me," Jesus explained (John 14:6).

Prayer in Jesus' name is an attitude of the heart. The classic praying figure is on his knees with his arms outstretched to heaven. His knees are bent to acknowledge that sin denies him any right to approach a holy God. His arms are lifted up in the name of Jesus, his only hope of being heard by his Creator.

Jesus' name allows us to "approach the throne of grace with confidence" (Hebrews 4:16). By itself, Jesus' personal name means "Savior." But the word "name" in Scripture denotes more than one's personal identification. It includes the individual's reputation, what is known, said, and written about him. So, to pray in Jesus' name means to pray with the confidence of everything the Bible tells us about him.

When we come to the throne of God we spend too much time on the little things and way too little on the big thing. How we word our prayers, the lists we make, and the posture we assume when we pray are the little things. The big thing in prayer, however, is access—access to the throne of a holy God. Access is granted by what Jesus has done to remove our sins. Without access in his name, none of the little things we do will make any difference.

For Jesus' sake, God hears the naive prayers of a little child and the confused petitions of a semi-comatose octogenarian. More

important than getting the words right is having a right heart toward God when we pray. Luther said, “Christ’s words, ‘in my name,’ are the prime factor and the foundation on which prayer is to stand and to rest” (WLS, p. 1,076).

Jesus removes all barriers between us and the Father

The attitude of heart God desires in those who call on him starts with a deep sense of personal unworthiness. Our sin blocks access to the throne of God. “Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2).

Prayer in the name of Jesus means to pray with the confidence that Jesus has removed that road-block. “He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross” (Colossians 2:13,14).

Daily Bible study removes the frustration of seemingly unanswered prayer. In the Word the Holy Spirit uses his sword to lay bare our sins and the sinful nature that lies behind them. He bends our souls to kneel before God. But with the same Scriptures he leads us into a fuller understanding of everything the name of Jesus stands for. And with this he lifts up our hands with confidence to heaven.



The name of Jesus, Scripture’s full record of all that he has done for us, announces God’s open door policy to every prayer whispered by the believer. The impulse that drives the frequency of our prayers, praise, and thanksgiving is not our personal list of needs. It is the confidence of faith that God hears. It is the access the name of Jesus gives us to the throne of grace.

“Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us” (Romans 8:34). Confidence in that ready access to the throne of God is, very simply,

saving faith. With such an attitude of heart, we do not have to kneel or stand or fold our hands to pray. All of life is a prayer breathed in the name of Jesus.

NL

Wayne Mueller is the administrator of the synod’s Board for Parish Services.

Who gives you the right?

When you feel uncertain and frightened as you lovingly reach out to a fellow believer caught in sin, reach up and take your heavenly Father's hand.

John M. Parlow

A father took his four-year-old daughter Andrea to explore the neighborhood. "Let's cover some new territory," he suggested. Off they went, striding out of the safe harbor of their cul-de-sac into unknown regions.

The area was new to her. They walked down streets she'd never seen. The yards were different. The kids looked older. The houses looked bigger.

The father thought the new sights and sounds might make his daughter anxious.

"Are you okay?" he asked.

"Sure."

"Do you know where we are?"

"No."

"Do you know how to get home?"

"No."

"And you aren't worried?"

She reached up and took his hand and said, "I don't have to know about those things, Dad. You already do. You are with me. That's good enough for me."

Sound familiar? Your Father in heaven wants you to realize he is with you. He wants you to relax and take his hand. In Matthew 18, we see that the Father sends many of us into unfamiliar territory, into the pastures of straying sheep, the land of the unrepentant. The area is new to us. Anxiety. Fear. Feelings of inadequacy abound. We may ask, "How can I confront a friend in a sin? How do I get him back on the

road that leads to his eternal home? Who gives me the right to do it?"

We have all pondered those questions when thinking about our Lord's commands in Matthew 18. Jesus gives the answers in our text.

The Father in heaven acts with us

"I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18).

The terms "binding" and "loosing," familiar to the Jewish audience, were used by Jewish rabbis. Jesus here tells us that every Christian has the ministry of the keys.

First, Jesus mentions the binding key. The word "bind" conveys the idea to "forbid." The binding key is the harsh preaching of the law. It is judging people's actions according to God's Word, telling someone he is wrong. If a person deliberately lives in a sinful lifestyle, Christians can say with absolute certainty, "You are under God's judgment and condemned to hell," because that is what Scripture teaches. That person is bound up in his sin and its damning consequences (Hebrews 10:23-27).

Unrepentant sin makes a person's life miserable. Worse, it destroys saving faith, and so, the key locks the sinner in his chosen judgment. It judges actions in the light of the absolute authority of Scripture. This is a heavy teaching, some might think

mean-spirited. But Jesus commands us to do it to rescue straying sheep.

Jesus gave us another key: the loosing key. The word "loose" conveys the idea to "permit, allow, even forgive." The loosing key is the gospel in Word and sacrament. It assures people that Jesus' blood covers sins completely. It tells the repentant she is at peace with God. It tells her that, because of Jesus, she can live in the comfort of total forgiveness. It unlocks her chains.

Jesus assures us we have the authority from the Father to bind and loose: "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven" (Matthew 18:19). When the church acts in God's behalf by dealing with unrepentant sin, God acts in the church's behalf by confirming their faithful actions.

All Christians are empowered to declare forgiveness to the repentant sinner because God's authoritative Word declares that all sin has been paid for by Jesus. That's authority. That's who gives you the right.

The Son on earth acts with us

"For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:20).

Here is a verse that gets terribly misapplied. Some believe this verse teaches that if any two people agree on anything, God has to give them

what they are asking for. That faulty interpretation rips this passage out of its context and violates the rest of Scripture. It reduces God to a heavenly vending machine, automatically bound to grant the most foolish request, simply because two of his children agree to ask him for it. It undercuts Scripture's commands to pray according to God's will.

**“Show me the Cross,
and I can find my way
home from there.”**

Some also say, “Well, if we can just get two or three people there to pray or worship together, God will be there.” However, if you have just one person, God is there. When you pray at night, all alone, Jesus is standing next to you. Jesus rejoices with those who gather to worship him, no matter how small the assembly, but that is not the stress here.

This passage stresses that the Son on earth also acts with us to carry out this straying-sheep ministry. The point is not corporate worship but the rescue of the straying. Who are the two or three he is talking about? Two or three witnesses carrying out discipline in the life of an unrepentant brother.

Jesus says, “When two or three witnesses gather in my name, that is, when they come together to do my work of calling sin sin, of telling sinners of my forgiveness and salvation, and of trying to rescue the straying sheep, there I am supporting and empowering them.” That's great confidence! Not only is the Father in heaven acting with us, but the Son on earth is too. You are

fulfilling the will of God when you try to regain a sinning brother or sister.

We trust God will act with us

One of the landmarks of London is the Charing Cross. It is near the geographical center of the city and serves as a navigational tool for those confused by the streets.

A little girl was lost in the great city. A policeman found her. Between the sobs and tears, she explained she didn't know her way home. He asked if she knew her address. She didn't. She didn't know her phone number either. But when he asked her what she knew, suddenly her face lit up.

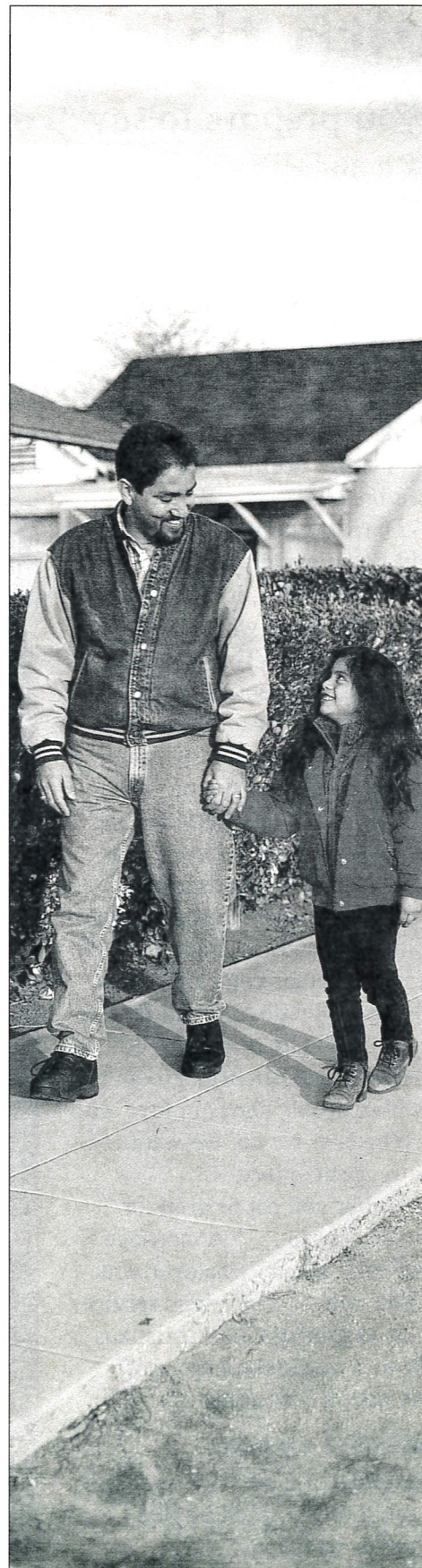
“I know the Cross,” she said. “Show me the Cross, and I can find my way home from there.”

So can you. Keep a clear vision of the cross on your horizon, and you can find your way home forever. Keep your eyes on that cross for it will remind you that there is no one who wants a straying brother or sister found more than your heavenly Father. Keep your eyes on the cross for it reminds you who empowers you for straying-sheep ministry.

When you feel uncertain and frightened as you lovingly reach out to a fellow believer caught in sin, reach up and take your heavenly Father's hand and say what Andrea said, “I'm not sure where I am. I'm not sure I have the strength to do this. But you do, and you are with me, and that's enough.”

NL

John Parlow is pastor at St. Mark, Green Bay, Wisconsin.



With this ring . . .

As you prepare to say "I do," let whatever you say and do glorify God.

Mark R. Bitter

You have a loving husband. He offered a gracious marriage proposal, not on bended knee, but with broken body bound to a cruel cross. His arms opened to the maul and spikes. He said, "I love you more than life itself." Then he took his last breath.

You have a giving husband. He bought you a wedding gown so white and beautiful, it made the Father of the bride whisper, "Perfect! Lovely!" The price was dear—the Bridegroom's blood.

You have a helpful husband. Every day he cleans up for you, sweeping all the dirt out of your life. When his Father performs the white glove test, he declares your "house" spic-and-span, spotless.

How does a bride respond to such a terrific husband? St. Paul gives the answer: "Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). The bride wants her Bridegroom to know how deeply she is in love with him. Whatever we do, we want Jesus to get the glory.

"Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do . . ." A marriage service falls under "whatever you do." The goal of a marriage service must be to glorify God. Christians gather to worship the Lord, not simply attend a wedding.

Questions to consider

The glory of God must be the goal of all of the wedding plans too. That raises questions:

- Will the couple want a bride-and-groom-centered service or Christ-centered worship?

- Will the bride consider the processional a fashion show, or a walk down the aisle to exchange solemn vows with her husband in the presence of God?

- Will the groom choose groomsmen who are known to play pranks that disrupt worship, or mature Christian friends who respect and honor Jesus?

- Will the couple choose service music that was written for the world



because they like the songs, or music that was written for the glory of God in his church?

**Christians gather to worship
the Lord, not simply
attend a wedding.**

- Will they choose songs that sing about their romantic love for each other, or songs that focus on Jesus and his love for his bride?
- Will they want Uncle Glen to sing a solo because he's got a great voice, even though he's Methodist, or will they choose a soloist who is in fellowship with our church?
- Will the bride and groom exchange vows that clearly reflect God's will for Christian marriage?
- Will they want toddlers in the wedding party who might act up and disrupt the service, or will they be sure that all of the members of the wedding party are mature enough to participate reverently?
- Will they consider the service a photo opportunity, or will they speak with the photographer and guests about when it is proper to take pictures?
- Will they light a unity candle to express their oneness in Christ?
- Will they want the congregation to sing hymns and join in prayer and praise?

How to find some answers

Many more questions could be asked. Whatever the issue, strive for what gives God glory.

The choice of music and musicians often creates a problem. People have even quit the church because the church wouldn't allow them to have the songs or the musicians they wanted.

A young couple's understanding of what is good music for a marriage service may be limited. Trust your pastor and church musicians for their advice. They're the experts. If you're going to have heart surgery, you're not going to tell the surgeon how to do the surgery. He's the expert. When it comes to church music, your church musicians and pastor know what music will glorify God. Follow their lead.

Another problem arises when a couple wants a family member or friend not of our fellowship to serve as a musician in the service. Asking someone who does not believe what we believe to lead our worship is certainly not avoiding those who teach what is "contrary to the teaching you have learned" (Romans 16:17).

Turn the tables. Imagine if your pastor said, "I'd like my Uncle Glen to officiate at your wedding. He's a Methodist minister."

**Friends and family might have
to take a seat in the pew
if God's will is to be done
and he is to be glorified.**

You say, "But Pastor, we don't invite ministers of churches not of our fellowship to serve in our church and lead our worship."

Your pastor responds, "But he's my uncle!"

Rather a foolish reason, isn't it? Friends and family might have to take a seat in the pew if God's will is to be done and he is to be glorified. Blood relation is important, but not as important as the blood that was spilled to bring us into the family of God as the bride of Christ. Each day your loving Bridegroom

is walking you down the aisle toward the wedding feast of the Lamb. On a day as special as your wedding day, resolve to do whatever you can to glorify him!

NL

Mark R. Bitter is pastor at Good Shepherd, The Woodlands, Texas.

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Love for a Lifetime: Building a Marriage That Will Go the Distance (AA12-2698)

Marriage by the Book: Biblical Models for Marriage Today (AA12-2708)

Deepening Love for Marital Happiness (AA12N-1755)

Picture this

As you get older, many times you form opinions, and it's difficult to get a fresh look at the "same old things."

In this series, children from 10 different churches gave us a fresh look at their church—both in pictures and in words.



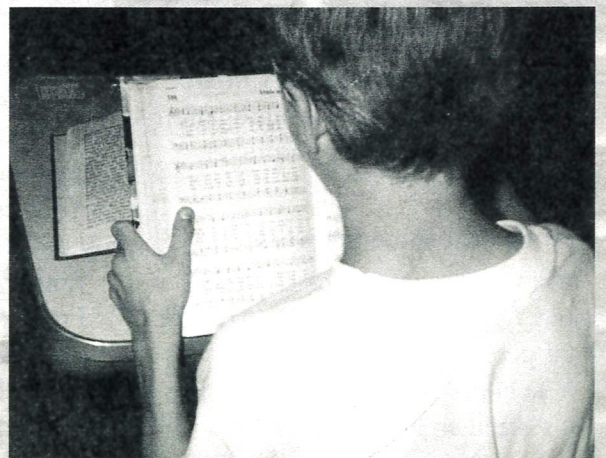
Dominican Republic—One camera in the Dominican Republic was passed around to various children because, according to the missionaries, it was impossible to pick just one child. The children don't get to take many pictures so they all wanted a chance to use the camera. A Bible class outside Mercedes' (a member) house in Garado.



Dominican Republic—Yaditsa Veloz
Three families waiting for the taxi that will take them to church. Four women were confirmed at church that Sunday.

GOOD SHEPHERD
EV. LUTHERAN
CHURCH U A C
1959

Good Shepherd, Omaha, Neb.—Chris and Rachel Danford, age 11
"This is the cornerstone of our church, like Jesus is for us."



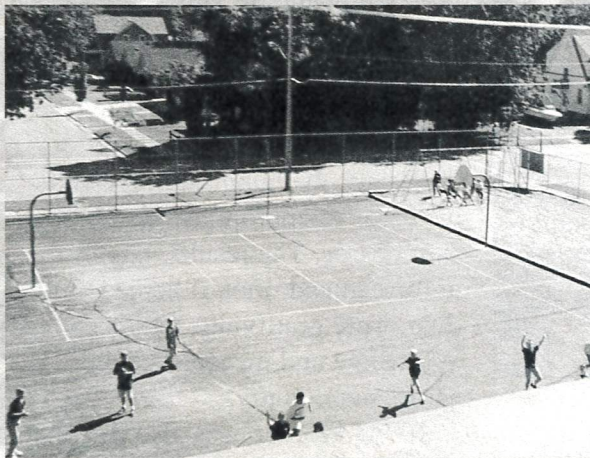
Emanuel, New London, Wis.—Megan Johnson, age 10
"I saw this as worship because singing hymns is praising God."



St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis.—Alicia Sebald, age 7
"This is the front door of the church. Pastor is shaking everybody's hand by the door. Sometimes there's juice and dessert after church. And I like that a lot. I visit with my friends, and my best friend is Sam."



Shepherd, Albuquerque, N.M.—Rochelle Pochop, age 13
"'Feeling how Jesus felt.' Skits at VBS help Bible lessons stick in my mind better."



Emanuel, New London, Wis.—Becky Favorite, age 11
"This is how God looks down on his children at Emanuel Lutheran School in New London, Wis. He sees them playing together nicely."



Shepherd, Albuquerque, N.M.—Emma Veers, age 8
"This is a picture of my friend Crystal Montoya. I took this picture because she is my best friend. Crystal learned about Jesus at school and was baptized."



St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis.—Andrew Harris, age 13
"This is my church where I go to show my love for God."



Good Shepherd, Omaha, Neb.—Kim Loontjer, age 13
"Pastor working on passages with us." (listening to them recite).

His forte was fishing

Like Peter, Andrew, James, and John, Wilmer Martin Otto (“Wim”) Valleskey “fished” on land as ardently as he did in the sea.

Morton E. Schroeder

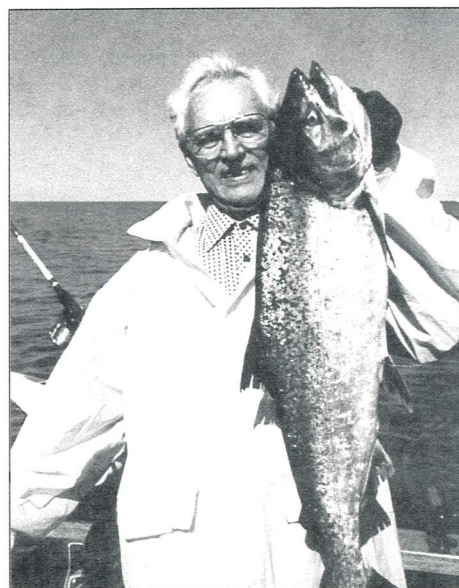
Other than *vocabulary* itself, few polysyllabic words are part of the everyday working vocabulary of everyday working folks. Exceptions, found in pockets of society occupied by WELSpeople, are words derived from the Greek *evangelion*: evangelical, evangelist, evangelism. Partially responsible for this awareness is a now-sainted pastor largely unknown by many in WELS: Wilmer Martin Otto Valleskey.

Evangelism in the parish

Born to everyday working folks—his mother a homemaker, his father a dairy farmer—on a farm in Town Brillion, Wis., Valleskey entered the ministry during the grim days of the Depression when calls were as scarce as bullhead scales. But Valleskey, an angler of some skill, found a spot to fish for men: the Michigan district. Crediting his teachers and a colleague, Valleskey became an ardent advocate of taking the gospel to the streets. Evangelism became his *raison d’être*.

Valleskey’s third call carried him from a complacent, largely-rural dual parish south of Green Bay, Wis., to the challenges of a young congregation—Hope—on Detroit’s far east side. Located 10 miles from the heart of a city energized by demands to become democracy’s arsenal and bloated by increasing numbers of transient workers, Hope held its first service in 1930 in an empty store. Starting in 1931 and continuing for 13 years, it owned

and sold properties in Harper-Morang-Worden-Cadieux, an area two blocks from the city limits.



One of Valleskey’s pastimes was fishing. He also kept busy with bird hunting, raising dogs, making wine, and riding motorcycles. And he shared the gospel with residents of a home who were unable to go to church.

Valleskey arrived at Hope 11 years after it organized in 1932. Its motto, “Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul” (Hebrews 6:19), was a unique fit for a man who owned a boat almost all of his adult life. Valleskey served Hope for 39 years. In that time, Hope opened a branch Sunday school in a neighboring town, had seminary students do summer canvassing, conducted an active “bus ministry,” reached a Sunday school enrollment of 260, became self-supporting, dedicated a relocated church, began two morning services, liquidated its debts,

helped form the first black congregation in the synod, and dedicated a new church.

Evangelism around the synod

Hope dissolved in 1984, but one address connected with it remained well-known: 10729 Worden, Detroit MI 48224. This was the hub of a program begun by Valleskey: the Soul Conservation Program. Addresses of synod’s members who had moved to areas without WELS congregations were sent there. Valleskey, the hubmaster, relayed the cards to appropriate district mission boards. The results, largely unforseen and often ridiculed at the time, were gratifying: souls kept on WELSline and missions begun across our country.

10729 Worden was also the first address of The Evangelism Bookstore, which Valleskey operated from the basement. Through it were made available to synod’s lay members and clergy materials produced primarily by the Michigan district commission on evangelism. *Talk About the Savior*, which “Wim” lovingly referred to as TAS, was a primer of the ways and whys of evangelism. His wife, children, and grandchildren who lived near Detroit—or were visiting Grandma and Grandpa—were helpers. After removing from Detroit to three successive Milwaukee locations, the bookstore came under the aegis of synod’s Commission on Evangelism and its publishing house.

One granddaughter remembers an “Evangelism Workshop”—a workroom in which materials were duplicated and shipped—located in the church office. She also recalls an accident involving a paper cutter. The unsecured blade nipped two of Grandpa’s fingers. “He permanently had a pointed finger,” she reports.

Anything written about Valleskey eventually comes to this: “The chief love and focus of his ministry was evangelism.” One essayist named him “Mr. Evangelism.” A Michigan district historian says: “Valleskey had a gift for working his Detroit neighborhoods.”

That gift encompassed first the district and later the synod like a fly fisher’s cast. Valleskey was elected chairman of the district’s commission on evangelism, a panel then unique in WELS. The district, seeking to broaden its activities, petitioned the 1961 synod convention to form commissions in the other eight synodical districts. The motion failed to set irreversible forces into irresistible motion. Twenty years passed before another convention took a step: call an executive secretary for evangelism. Lack of funds stymied movement. However, after the 1983 convention validated the ’81 action, funds were found. The first evangelism secretary was installed 10 months later on June 11, 1984. After 134 years of WELS history, evangelism was formally recognized as a legitimate activity.

The cup of joy the Valleskeys drank when their three sons entered the ministry must have overflowed on Sept. 12, 1984. Then, the oldest, David, was installed at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary as teacher of New Testament and evangelism, this the first time evangelism as a

scholarly discipline was included in a seminary call. Recognizing his father’s influence in his life, the son says, “I learned a lot from my dad.”

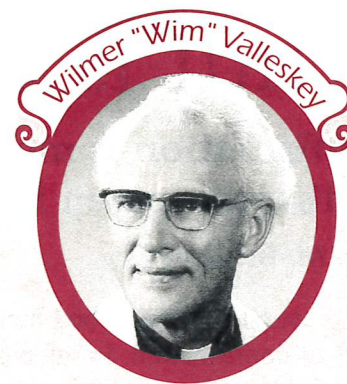
“Fishing” in retirement

Valleskey’s life was characterized by a zest for living, one which added several dimensions during retirement. He and his beloved Elsie divided those years between rural Yale and Manistee, Mich., and Brownsville, Tex. Each locale offered delights. Valleskey was an avid bird hunter; for a number of years he raised German short-haired pointers as a hunting help, a hobby, and a source of income. A bearskin rug, his trophy of another hunt, fascinated the grandchildren. Production of wines from his vineyard in Yale became a major activity. After experimentation, the wine, it is said, “actually began to taste pretty good.”

Like Peter, Andrew, James, and John, he fished on land as ardently as in the sea: Coho salmon fishing in Lake Michigan near Manistee and surf fishing in Texas. When he was 68, he returned to a youthful passion: motorcycling. His children found out when a granddaughter gleefully reported that Grandpa had given her a ride. There is no record of Elsie’s reaction to his renewed interest, but he abandoned its delights just before he turned 70. An unexpected curve tossed him unkindly into a water-filled ditch.

Valleskey actively “talked about the Savior” to life’s end. He received tapes of services at Trinity, Brillion and shared them with home-bound residents of Cherrywood Home in Sterling Heights, Mich., where Mrs. Valleskey was and remains a resident.

Morton Schroeder, a retired DMLC professor, lives in Appleton, Wisconsin.



- Nov. 5, 1911, born to Mr. Adolph and Mrs. Clara Mahnke Valleskey, Town of Brillion, Wis.
- 1932, graduated from Concordia College, Milwaukee, Wis.
- 1935, graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Thiensville
- 1935-36, teacher, Trinity, Brillion, Wis.
- Oct. 20, 1935, ordained and installed as Trinity’s assistant pastor
- 1936-41, pastor, dual parish of Greenleaf and Kasson, Wis.
- June 30, 1936, married Elsie Schweningen
- 1941-80, pastor, Hope, Detroit
- March 16, 1952, organized and served as first pastor, Zoar, Detroit
- 1956-63, board of regents member, Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw
- 1960-1978, member and chairman, WELS Michigan district commission on evangelism
- Feb-March, 1972, discussed “personal witnessing” with Hope’s board members
- Produced evangelism manual, *Talk About the Savior*
- Founded The Evangelism Bookstore
- 1980, retired from full-time ministry
- 1995, wrote *Origin and Defense of Talk About the Savior*
- May 20, 1996, died, Warren, Mich.

NL

Lutheran What is confirmation?

Confirmation is meaningless if viewed apart from the instruction in God's truth given in preparation for the rite.

John M. Brenner

I have wonderful childhood memories of confirmation. I remember the special services and the beautiful music. I remember the sermons stressing the importance of the means of grace, the gospel in Word and sacraments. I remember the exhortations to treasure our gospel heritage and to continue in God's Word. I remember the confirmands publicly confessing their faith, declaring their intention to continue in the truths they had been taught.

There were other things that marked confirmation Sunday as something special. The confirmands had white robes and corsages. They entered and left the church in a solemn procession. After the service there were pictures, presents, open houses, and marvelous dinners. It was festive.

But how did these customs develop? What exactly is confirmation?

Different meaning in churches

Confirmation is not commanded in Scripture. Nor are there directives for confirmation in the Bible. It is a church rite, something that developed historically in the life of the church. In fact, confirmation means different things to different people in various denominations.

The Eastern Orthodox confirmation involves anointing a person with oil immediately after baptism. The Orthodox regard this practice as a sacrament that gives the Holy Spirit. They believe that through this confirmation (or "chrismation"

as they also call it) a child becomes a full member of the people of God. In their view confirmation is a seal of the Holy Spirit who comes upon the individual with power as he did upon the apostles on Pentecost.

Confirmation in the Roman Catholic Church is a rite usually performed several years after an infant is baptized. Rome claims that confirmation is a sacrament that imparts grace, and the Holy Spirit offers the strengthening of faith and power for spiritual growth. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that confirmation perfects baptismal grace, incorporates a person more firmly into Christ, and helps the individual to bear witness to the Christian faith in words accompanied by deeds.

Not commanded by God

Confirmation, however, is not a sacrament. Christ did not institute it, nor do we have any promise of God attached to it.

Lutherans have never had a consistent confirmation practice. In fact, only in the last century or two has confirmation become a nearly universal practice among Lutherans.

Martin Luther did not use a rite



of confirmation because he wanted to avoid any suggestion that confirmation was a sacrament. He wanted to distance himself from the Roman Catholic practice. Luther placed his focus on the careful instruction of the youth in the basic teachings of the Bible. He regularly examined those who wished to commune to see if they had the proper Christian knowledge and understanding to partake of Christ's body and blood.

Nevertheless Lutherans began practicing a rite of confirmation

even during Luther's lifetime. The great Reformer did not object to it so long as people recognized that it was neither a sacrament commanded by God nor necessary to be observed.

Questionable practices

Some Lutheran practices that developed over the centuries were positive. Others showed a misunderstanding of biblical truth. Some Lutheran rites implied that the Holy Spirit was given in confirmation through the laying on of hands. These rites implied that confirmation conferred membership in the church. But we know that the Holy Spirit comes only through the means of grace, the gospel in Word and sacraments. No human rite can impart the Holy Spirit. People become members of the Christian church by faith through the sacrament of baptism.

Others looked at confirmation as a renewal of the baptismal covenant. They implied that baptism was somehow incomplete. But we know that the covenant God made with us at baptism is good for all time. It does not need to be renewed by God and cannot be renewed by us.

Still others viewed confirmation as a rite of passage, a kind of coming-of-age ceremony. Because of this understanding of confirmation some began to think of confirmation as graduation. Being confirmed meant that they had no more need for formal religious training. This attitude often led to a neglect of Bible study and the falling away from the Lutheran faith.

Praiseworthy practices

For many Lutherans confirmation has a much more positive purpose. Confirmation is intended to give those who have received basic

instruction in the truths of God's Word the opportunity publicly to confess their faith before the church. The rite informs the congregation that these catechumens have sufficient scriptural understanding and spiritual maturity to partake of the Lord's Supper. The congregation prays that the Holy Spirit will preserve the confirmands in faith to the end of their days and invites them to partake of the Lord's Supper.

**The importance of
confirmation does not lie
in the rite itself. The focus
must always be on the
means of grace.**

White gowns, corsages, confirmation mementos, presents, and dinners are fine customs so long as they do not detract from the scriptural message or give the impression of a graduation service.

The importance of confirmation does not lie in the rite itself. The focus must always be on the means of grace. The ceremony is intended to remind everyone what God has done in baptism. He has given us spiritual life and made us his children. The ceremony stresses the importance of Christian instruction and continuing in God's Word. It points to the glorious gift our Savior gives us in his Supper. It reminds us that he gives us his very body and blood to assure us of his forgiveness and to strengthen our faith.

Confirmation is meaningless if viewed apart from the instruction in God's truth given in preparation for the rite. This instruction imparts the basic teachings of Christianity and

provides the knowledge necessary for growth toward Christian maturity. Catechism class lays a foundation upon which the Christian will build for a lifetime. We dare never imply that confirmation is graduation or that confirmation means that a person has no need to continue to grow in Christian knowledge.

God has commanded us to instruct children and adults in his truth. He has not commanded us to have a rite like confirmation. The rite is valuable only so long as people understand its purpose and recognize the importance of continued instruction and participation in worship and the Lord's Supper. But when confirmation is understood and practiced properly, it can be very meaningful.

I have fond memories of confirmation. I remember the solemn yet festive atmosphere. But more than that, my memories center in the instruction I was given. Those memories move me to thank God for the efforts of pastor, teachers, parents, and congregation in providing me and my friends with the Word of life. The memories also remind me that I have a precious gospel to share with the coming generations as well as with the whole world.

NL

John M. Brenner is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon.

Blessings behind bars

Even at 92, Alf witnessed to God's grace as he accompanied prisoners while they sang hymns of praise.

David A. Tetzlaff

Alf was over 90 years old when I met him. He was serving two consecutive terms at Oshkosh Correctional Institution in Wisconsin for murdering two men who, he said, had cheated and robbed him.

Alf had been confirmed in the old conservative Norwegian Lutheran Church. Although he fell away from church in his late teenage years, he never forgot what he learned in confirmation instruction classes or the many Norwegian Lutheran hymns. While Alf was in prison he had time to read and study the Bible. The Holy Spirit brought him to repent of his sins, receive God's forgiveness, and rededicate himself to the Savior. Alf was happy to find a home in our services and Bible classes. After a review of Scripture and

the Sacraments and on the basis of his confession, he received Holy communion. He attended services and Bible classes faithfully.

Alf knew how to play the piano. He loved to play hymns. He saved enough to mail order a small keyboard, which he played in his cell. Alf would often sing solos at services and suggested that we close our weekly Bible studies with singing a hymn. He volunteered to accompany us on a small electronic organ.

It was quite a chore for him because his fingers, stiffened with age and arthritis, couldn't keep up with us, even though we tried to sing the words slowly. We would always finish a verse before Alf finished. This never seemed to frustrate him, and we learned to cope with it.

The joy it brought Alf seemed to overcome the frustration of the other inmates. Besides musical abilities, God blessed Alf with a sense of humor. He always had a Norwegian joke to share with us even if he had to slip it in somewhere in our Bible study.

When Alf became eligible for parole, the parole board knew that because of his age and having become so much a part of prison life, he never would have made it on the outside. He

admitted sheepishly that if he was paroled, he would soon be back at the prison gate begging to be let back in.

Once when Alf missed two Bible classes at Oshkosh, I assumed he was ill but would be back. Age had taken its toll on him, and his health was fragile. But when I conducted my Bible study at Jackson Correctional Institution, who should be the first man to walk into the chapel but Alf! He had gotten transferred. He stopped, looked at me, and said: "I never thought I would see you again." He walked up and hugged me. Alf was a regular there until a lung condition kept him confined to his unit.

Our Lord called Alf home at the age of almost 93 years. When our Lord calls you to be with him in heaven, look for Alf. You'll probably find him singing with an angels' choir, maybe singing in Norwegian.

Then, thank the Lord for bringing us all into his heavenly kingdom and for providing a prison ministry so souls like Alf can be reclaimed by the gospel. But also thank the Lord that Alf won't have to try to accompany us as we sing hymns of praise to the Lamb!

David Tetzlaff is a chaplain for the Northern Wisconsin District Institutional Ministry.

NL



INTER-ACT

Randy K. Hunter

"The word of God is living and active." Hebrews 4:12

Introduction

- Where would I be if I had studied business instead of teaching?
- What if I had taken that job offer out of state 10 years ago?
- How would my life be different if I had married?

The road not taken. Questions about that road can be harmless. We muse about them for a few seconds and then move on. What harmless questions about the road *not* taken have you asked yourself?

Thoughts about past opportunities and decisions can be harmful, too. Every rebellion against God begins with a thought. Consider the three fictitious examples above. How could they lead to sin?

Consider your "real life" examples. How might your questions become harmful?

Paul spoke with people whose culture was much like ours. They did not deny God. For them, just about anything was a god! Today most people don't deny God. They figure they can find him just about anywhere—from a Robert Fulghum book to a TV show about angels. Paul tried to clarify God. So must we. We can begin where Paul did. We can begin with our lives just the way they are, right where we are.

Text

Read Acts 17:26,27

²⁶From one man he [God] made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. ²⁷God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

Questions

1. Read the whole record of Paul's adventure in Athens (Acts 17:16-34). As you read, look for evidence that the people of Athens were, in their own way, "seeking" God. Discuss what you find.
2. As you read through these verses again, consider how Paul contrasted their gods and the true God. Discuss the differences you find.
3. The door was open for Paul to witness to the Athenians. He didn't want that door to slam shut. Consider verses 22-31. What common ground with the Athenians did Paul find?
4. Athens was a proud city—a university town with a world-wide reputation for religion and philosophy. Why might vs. 26b have been a bitter pill for them to swallow?
5. All witnessing leads to the cross. In your own words, how did Paul get them there?

Applications

1. Athenians or not, what might trouble us about vs. 26b?
2. What's comforting about it?
3. What difference does this truth make when you're facing unemployment?
relocation?
marriage?
promotion?
family loss?
4. We do not witness for Christ when we proudly proclaim, "I'm a firm believer that what's meant to be will happen." Christianity is not fatalism. The difference is the gospel. Our forgiveness won by Jesus convinces us of God's love; love that also moved him to place us right where we are. How might you speak of God's love when talking about your "station" in life? (Talk about your own life or use the situations in the previous question.)

Prayer

Dear God, without your grace I would ever seek you but never find you. Thank you for seeking and finding me. Thank you for putting me where I am and making me how I am. When my life doesn't go the way I'd planned, show me your plan. Give me a heart for bearing witness to your love right where I am, among the people I'm with. Thank you for the privilege. Amen.



Elsie Johnson, a member at Emmanuel, Las Cruces, N.M., was commissioned on Sept. 28, 1997, to serve at the Mwembezi Lutheran Rural Health Clinic, Zambia. She sold her car and her home and left for Africa on Oct. 2.

The medical mission is funded entirely by special gifts. The synod entrusted this project to the women in WELS, but it is also supported by schools and church groups.

The need for single nurses and married nurse couples continues. To learn more about serving in this ministry, contact Kathie Wendland, 414/682-5694.

Pregnancy counseling center opens

Tomorrow's Choice Family Resource Center, a new WELS pregnancy counseling center, opened in Waukesha, Wis., in November.

Tomorrow's Choice provides free pregnancy testing as well as Christian counseling in crisis pregnancy and post-abortion syndrome. Open three days a week, the center also has a 24-hour hot-line service.

Members of 15 Waukesha county WELS churches founded this center to help protect and promote God's gift of life. It's funded by private donations from area church members.

The center is under the direction of the national WELS Lutherans for Life (WLFL) office, which provides educational materials and services for this center and 24 others around the country. WLFL also primarily funds and works with New Beginnings: A Home for Mothers, Denver, Colo., which offers women in crisis pregnancies a home both before and after the birth.



Public Ministry of the Gospel, (Code 5191), 1997, 10 min., color, JSCA

What's it like to serve in the public ministry? What are the joys and challenges that face a pastor or teacher? This video gives us a look at the personal lives of people who serve the Lord in the full-time ministry. An excellent aid for Recruitment Sunday.

Bible Stories for Children

Two stories were added to the selection of quality Bible cartoons.

Elisha (Code 8263) 1995, 25 min. color PIJA

Ruth (Code 8264) 1995, 25 min. color PIJA

These videos are available for rental for \$7.50 by congregations, schools, and church groups. Subscribers may order them for the cost of return postage from Audiovisual Library Services, Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284; 414/475-6600; 1-800-662-6093.

Keeping teens involved

It's not a common way to spend a week of vacation. Four teenage girls and one pastor, all from different congregations, traveled from Wisconsin to assist a Texas congregation.

This unlikely team was formed after the 1996 regional youth rally in Madison, Wis. At that rally teens canvassed neighborhoods. Building on the success of that project, the Western Wisconsin District's Commission on Youth Discipleship wanted to continue encouraging teens to be active in the church and to let their light shine.

One opportunity was created when Bruce Wietzke, pastor at Salem, Lowell, Wis., took four public-school teens to Austin, Tex., last summer to assist Risen Savior with outreach.

Working with Eddie Greschell, pastor at Risen Savior, and another girl from that congregation, the canvass team reached over 250 people. They also distributed almost 3,000 flyers promoting Risen Savior's vacation Bible school the following week.

But the teens weren't the only ones involved. "This was also a way for each girl's church to play a personal part in mission work," says Wietzke.

To cover expenses, the teens needed to raise \$300. So each girl's home congregation paid for part, if not all, of the expenses.

The commission hopes to continue efforts like this, to give teens opportunities. Says Wietzke, "We need to keep teens involved."



Pastor Bruce Wietzke, Lowell, Wis., and four teens who traveled to Dallas, Tex., to assist with outreach. From left: Carla Slaback and Sarah Andrews, from Mt. Olive, Monroe, Wis.; Melissa Roberts, from St. Luke, Watertown, Wis.; Jamie Schultz, from Divine Word, Plover, Wis.

Breaking barriers

Throughout the United States and the world, English as a Second Language (ESL) is breaking barriers, opening doors, and spreading the gospel.

At a meeting last fall, members from home and world missions and ministerial education met to discuss how each area of ministry could use ESL to further the gospel.

In world missions, ESL is already being used by missionaries in Hong Kong, Thailand, Taiwan, Japan, Bulgaria, Albania, and Indonesia.

Former missionary to Hong Kong, John Chworowsky says that by teaching ESL to people in previously communist countries, "people learn to trust Christians, the very people they were told to avoid."

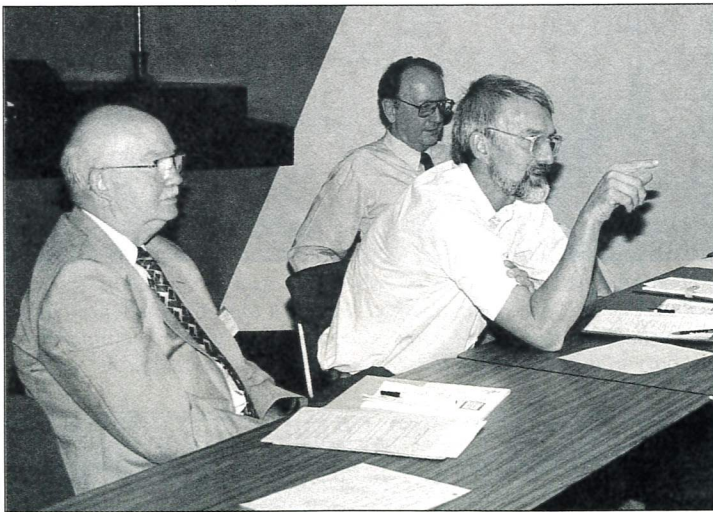
In home missions, pastors and lay members throughout the United States are reaching out to immigrants. Because of the growing diversity of the U.S. population, the need to teach English is great.

Keith Wakeman, one of 32 ESL teachers in a school system where 60 percent of elementary students are Hmong, says, "We honor other people when we make an effort to learn their language and their culture."

Once the immigrants see Christians' commitment to them, they are more willing to hear the message of the Savior.

Ministerial education, through a grant from AAL, will hold a four-week ESL workshop at Martin Luther College this summer focusing on teaching English as a foreign language. The workshop will allow 15 WELS teachers, world missionaries, and home missionaries to earn their certification in this area.

Teaching ESL is a new way to develop relationships that allow everyone to share the gospel. Says Chworowsky, "A generation ago, it would have been strange to have a minister teaching only English. But we show the love of Christ in every way, and we can break down barriers."



Harold Essmann, project coordinator of the Multi-Language Literature Program, and Brian Dose and John Isch, professors at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., were among those who met to see how they could use relationships formed by teaching English as a Second Language to help spread the gospel.

rē·li·giōn

Defining religion

Trinity: Three in one. The God of the Bible has revealed himself as one God (Deuteronomy 6:4, 1 Corinthians 8:4), yet three distinct Persons "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19,

2 Corinthians 13:14). The words Trinity and triune were coined by Christians to describe God as he has revealed himself in the Scriptures.



Christ-Light® FAQ

Christ-Light®, the synod's new coordinated religion curriculum for cradle roll through grade 12, will be phased into congregations over four years, starting in 1998. Gerald Kastens, youth discipleship administrator, answers frequently asked questions (FAQ).

Will there be separate lessons for Lutheran elementary school teachers, Sunday school teachers, and parents?

The Cradle Roll materials were written specifically with parents of children ages birth to four in mind. Each lesson has a simple parent guide containing age-appropriate activities and teaching suggestions for each Bible story. For grades pre-kindergarten on up, there will be one rich resource for everyone—a teacher's guide containing more ideas than can be used for a single lesson.

The approach to teaching a Bible lesson in Sunday school is the same one used for a Lutheran elementary school child. The teacher introduces the lesson, states an AIM question, tells the Bible story, questions and penetrates the lesson, makes two or three applications, and assigns activities and memory work.

Do we need to invest in 3-ring binders?

A pocket folder would work better. The children's lessons in grades pre-k through six will come in a saddle-stitched perforated booklet so that each lesson can be torn out and taken home. The goal is to have the children take the lessons home. The use of three-ring binders might be a barrier to this goal.

All of the junior high school and high school lessons will be bound with a cover and saddle-stitched.



District news

rē · li · giōn

Defining religion

Minor Prophets: Those Old Testament prophets who wrote shorter books of the Bible. The last 12 books of the Old Testament (Hosea through Malachi) are included in the Minor Prophets.

Minnesota

The Ladies Aid of St. John, Goodhue, Minn., (Minneola Township) celebrated its 60th anniversary in June 1997.

North Atlantic

St. Paul, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, held a marriage enrichment seminar on Oct. 25. Eleven couples attended the seminar, which included a renewing of marriage vows and a romantic candlelight dinner.

Kevin Schultz

Southeastern Wisconsin

Ken Lenz, chaplain at Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries, Milwaukee, confirmed 11 men at the Waupun Correctional Institute. They now meet as a "church" on Sunday mornings.

Arizona-California

California Lutheran High School, Wildomar, received gifts totaling \$100,000 in its matching fund drive for capital expansion. An architect completed preliminary drawings for a permanent education/activity building.

Hermann John

Pacific Northwest

On Sept. 28, Christ the King, Bremerton, Wash., celebrated the 25th anniversary of **Pastor Theodore Lambert**. Lambert organized and established the congregation and has served there his entire ministry. . . . **Beautiful Savior, Corvallis, Ore.,** celebrated its 25th anniversary on Nov. 16. . . . **King of Kings, Kennewick, Wash.,** made its final mortgage payment in November and rejoiced with a mortgage-burning celebration. . . . **Evergreen LHS, Kent, Wash., sports teams** had a great fall season. Both

girls and boys soccer teams ranked first in State academically, and girls volleyball placed second. **To celebrate the boys soccer team's finish at state, their coach, Jeff Kurbis, let the team shave his head.** The clippers were ready, but the power blew throughout the building. An extension cord was uncoiled and plugged in at Holy Trinity, located next door. Then, in the middle of the dark gym, each player took a turn cutting off a few of the coach's curly red locks.

David Birsching



Youth from Good Hope, Ellensburg, Wash., with Pastor Bob Seifert. As a service to the community, they replaced a windbreak in the neighboring town of Kittitas. It took 13 youth, from ages five to 17, two months to finish. "Even though our congregation is small, with a communicant membership of 35, we are busy in the Lord," says Bob Seifert, pastor at Good Hope.



The Arizona-California Teachers' Conference celebrated its 50th anniversary in November at King of Kings, Garden Grove, Calif.



John Vogt, pastor at Emanuel, Lansing, Mich., writes:

If anyone doubts the value of Christian education,

if anyone questions the comfort we have because of Easter, please consider the following letter. It was written, without prompting and without editing, by one of our fifth-grade boys [he's now in the seventh-grade] to one of his young friends whose mother was on her deathbed with cancer.

Dear Drew,

I am very sorry about your Mom. But I know she is a Christian, and she will be in heaven where there is no pain or troubles. If you believe that Jesus is your Savior and that he rose on Easter, then someday you will be with her in heaven. She may suffer on this earth, but in heaven she won't suffer or be sad. You should save this letter and if you ever feel sad about her, read this letter and say a prayer to God. Don't always be sad. I know it's hard to lose a loved one, but you will see her again, and she will not be in pain. Always remember that Jesus is watching over you.

Your friend,
Eric Martin



Looking for the perfect Valentine's Day gift?

Give the love of your life *Northwestern Lutheran*. Each issue shares the

message of a Savior who loved us so much that he gave up his life. Use the order form on page 4, or call toll-free 1-800-662-6093, ext. 8; (Milwaukee, 475-6600, ext. 5) weekdays 8 A.M. to 4 P.M. Charge it—Discover Card, MasterCard, or Visa—or bill it.

Nurturing families

A two-story house in the suburbs. A white picket fence. Dad and Mom and 2.4 children.

Single parents. Dad and Mom divorcing. Blended step-families.

The family unit has changed considerably. But one thing hasn't. Families need to be nurtured and built up in their faith.

This is the focus of family ministry, a renewed emphasis under the Commission on Adult Discipleship.

"The homes are hurting and don't have a relationship with Jesus," said William Heiges, coordinator of family ministry and pastor at Coal Creek exploratory, Louisville, Colo. "We have to show them their relationship with Jesus because that will affect the relationships within the family."

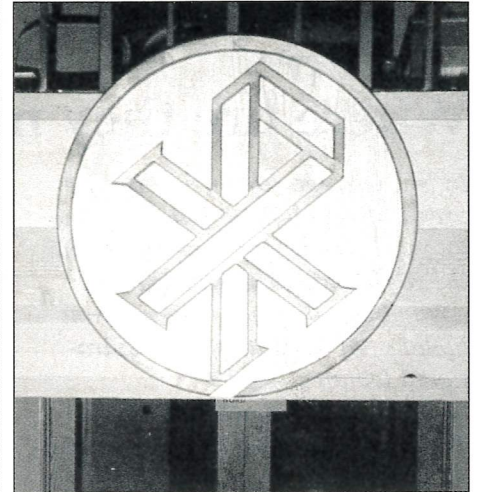
Unfortunately many families who need to be reached aren't active in their congregation, where spiritual nurture can take place.

To combat this, the commission's goal is to have trained laypeople visit families in their homes. Here the laypeople can conduct simple Bible studies, serve as mentors, and work one-on-one with troubled families.

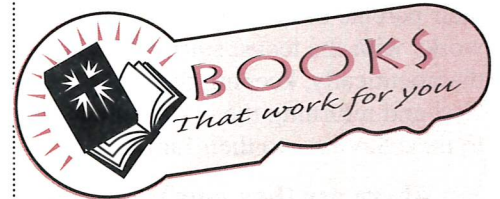
"We need to go and visit families," said Heiges. "If we can get the Word to them, we can stave off divorces. We can change bad habits into healthy ones."

To create healthy habits, the commission will encourage congregations to conduct marriage enrichment and parenting seminars. These seminars will help WELS members and also serve as outreach tools to area communities. The commission will also promote materials already produced by the synod and work to fill in gaps in areas not currently covered.

"We want to give parents a hunger for the Word and help them to grow spiritually," said Heiges. "Then they will see the importance of passing Jesus Christ on to their children."



Peace of our Savior, New Carlisle, Ohio, came up with a new way to use the hymnal Christian Worship's logo—a plaque made out of oak and walnut. A member made it to replace a clock that didn't work. Said Martin Wildauer, pastor at Peace of our Savior, "It seems especially appropriate to have the symbol of our book of worship hanging over our place of worship."



Have you seen the books Northwestern Publishing House has published for you recently? Now is a good time to look. They offer substance for everyone.

Christians in Crisis:

This practical series serves the Christian in need. It addresses common issues and offers insights from clinical authorities and from God's Word. The latest volumes treat loneliness and marriage.

Survival Guide for Being Alone:

Loneliness, Brian Terrell and Ron Koehler III. 116 pp., \$10.99, 15N2004.

Growing Together in Christ:

Marriage, Gene Gronholz and Mark Zarleng. 98 pp., \$10.99, 15N2005.



Where are they now?

In NL, we report the news. But we aren't always able to follow up and let you know what's happening now. We're running this short feature, "Where are they now" to give you updates on news items or inspirational features. —ed.

The story "School for in-crisis children opens" ran in the February 1997 issue.

Here's a recap:

Calvary Academy, a WELS boarding school for in-crisis youth, opened in January 1997. The school is staffed to teach elementary and secondary levels. Located in South Milwaukee, Wis., Calvary Academy houses troubled youth who are rebelling from their parents or all authority. The staff works with the teens, spiritually and therapeutically, keeping them close to God and returning them—committed to their Savior—to their families.

So, where are they now?

"Everything is going super!" says Pastor Richard Hennig, administrator of Calvary Academy. "But right now, we're strapped for beds."

Eleven students are enrolled, with

eight others on a waiting list.

Students live either in a duplex or at staff members' homes until they complete the program.

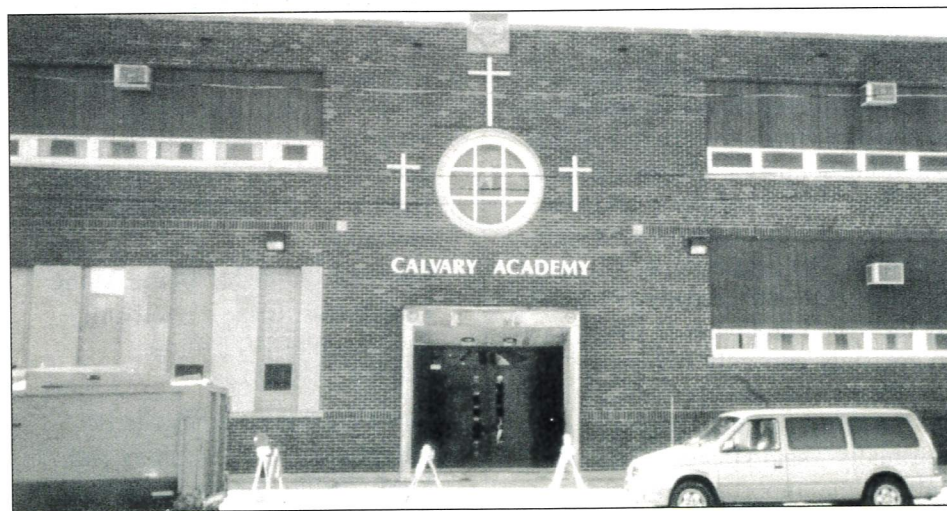
At the start of their 18-month stay, the students enter at level one and gradually gain more freedom, privileges, and contact with the community—moving up to level six. When they complete the program, the students move back home and attend an area Lutheran high school.

On Nov. 21, 1997, the first student "graduated."

"We had a service of praise and thanksgiving based on the return of the Prodigal Son," says Hennig. "There was a great deal of joy—and tears."

For all the students, there are ups and downs. But, through the dedication of Christian adults, "we're seeing a great deal of change in the teens lives," says Hennig.

For more information, contact Calvary Academy, 2200 9th Ave, South Milwaukee WI 53172; 414/571-1522; FAX, 414/571-5242; crisis number; 1-800-510-3989. For student intake information, ask for Robert Wasser, executive director.



Calvary Academy opened in 1997 after purchasing this building from Zion Lutheran School, South Milwaukee, Wis.

SYMBOLS for your life



Symbol: Cross and Crown

Background and meaning:

Through Christ's cross, suffering, and death, we have victory over death. Those who remain faithful to Christ in this life will receive their eternal reward in heaven.

Bible gems: 2 Timothy 4:8—

"Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing."

1 Peter 5:4—"And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away."

Revelation 2:10b—"Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life."

A symbol for your life: What does God promise to those who remain faithful to Him throughout their lives? Why is Revelation 2:10b often used as a confirmation passage? Do you know your confirmation passage?

Life issues media campaign planned

WELS Lutherans for Life is embarking on a national media campaign this year. The *Life: You Make the Difference* media campaign will consist of television and radio spots, print ads, a telephone hotline, printed materials, and a website. The goal is to reach people who are faced with life-related issues such as abortion, euthanasia, abstinence, and post-abortion syndrome.

For this project, WELS Lutherans for Life created a new media division called the Life Resource Center. "The research, focus groups, and surveys have been encouraging," says director Steve Zambo. "It is our prayer that the viewer or listener will be interested in the style, so that the important message contained in the spots will also be absorbed."

The campaign provides an immediate opportunity for those who need help to receive it through a national toll-free network.

"The key to the program is to provide help and direction to those who need it. There are no better people to do this than the countless WELS members across the country," says Zambo.

After the campaign is piloted this spring in Wisconsin, it will be available for national use in fall. The media campaign can be tailored to fit any budget, volunteer availability, and mission objectives of participants. The objective is not only to make a statement about life issues, or to provide physical help, but to direct people to the resource that provides the best help of all—the Word of God.

By working with WELS congregations, WELS Lutherans for Life's pregnancy counseling centers, and other resources, a strong network of support can be established to provide this needed help. For more information about the *Life: You Make the Difference* campaign and how you can get involved, call Ann Zuleger, 414/774-1331 or 1-800-729-9535.



The set of one of the commercials for the media campaign by WELS Lutherans for Life. The campaign is intended to help congregations reach out to the people in their communities who face life-related issues.

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Defining religion

Major Prophets: Those Old Testament prophets who wrote longer books of the Bible. Five books are included in the Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

Obituaries

Helen Ruth Scoles 1929-1997

Helen Scoles was born on Dec. 13, 1929, in Hemlock, Mich. She died on May 23, 1997, in Hemlock.

A graduate of Central Michigan University, Scoles taught at St. John, Hemlock, Mich., for 21 years.

She is survived by two sons and two daughters, 10 grandchildren, a brother, a sister, her mother-in-law, four sisters-in-law, nieces, and nephews.

YOUTH NEWS

In Antigua, at the close of their sixth grade year, students advance to secondary school by writing and passing a set of exams. They are granted a scholarship to one of the government (public) secondary schools if they pass.

Last June, over 1,300 pupils wrote the examinations; 818 passed. **Emily Henrich, a member at St. John's, Antigua, placed first.** On the island, this is an honor for the student's primary school. The news was broadcast on television and radio and spread the word about the work St. John's is doing.

Henrich was honored with a special medal and presentation by the Governor General of Antigua (Queen Elizabeth's official representative). She also went to Scotland for a Children's Parliament, as part of her award.



Most news reported in this section is derived from Religion News Service. Items do not necessarily reflect the views of WELS or *Northwestern Lutheran*.

Alabama official seeks to block enforcement of prayer ban

Alabama Attorney General Bill Pryor has filed papers seeking to block enforcement of a portion of a federal court order banning state-sanctioned prayer in public schools.

Pryor took the action so the state can appeal parts of Judge Ira DeMent's ruling blocking vocal prayer, Bible devotionals, and Scripture readings in public school classrooms. The order also banned school employees from distributing religious literature in schools, on school grounds, and at commencement ceremonies. It said school public address systems may not be used to deliver religious messages.

Pryor said parts of DeMent's ruling "actually violate the First Amendment and do not conform to recent decisions of the Supreme Court because they curtail and limit voluntary expression by students and private citizens."



Church ranks third in public confidence

The U.S. military, the police, and organized religion are the institutions that elicit greatest public confidence today.

The military, ranked number one last year, however, lost a little ground. The figures for the police and organized religion are virtually the same as last year. Little change is recorded for the other institutions, except for the presidency, which has risen in public confidence markedly since last year.

Until the late 1980s, the church or organized religion enjoyed the most confidence of the public, leading all other institutions. About two Americans in three named the church as an institution in which they placed utmost trust.

The highest point in confidence for the Church or organized religion was recorded in 1975 when 68 percent expressed "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence. The low point was recorded in 1989 when the figure was 52 percent. The latest survey shows 56 percent of survey respondents say they have either a "great deal" (35%) or "quite a lot" (21%) of confidence in the Church or organized religion.

Family disruption may keep Gen-Xers from church

Researchers who conducted a study of Gen-Xers say their findings may help congregations in working with the young adults missing from the church fold.

The researchers surveyed 1,150 people in North Carolina and southern California about their worship styles, church-going habits, and religious beliefs. The participants included Generation Xers—those born between 1964 and 1979—as well as Baby Boomers, those born between 1946 and 1963, and Pre-boomers, those born prior to 1946.

Of those interviewed, 45 percent of Xers went through some sort of family disruption—the divorce or separation of their parents, or they were raised by a single parent. That compares to 27 percent of the Boomers and 23 percent of the Pre-boomers.

Rev. Jackson W. Carroll, professor of religion and society at Duke University Divinity School, said the survey showed that more than 80 percent of each group believe in God, but a majority of all three generations were dissatisfied with the vitality of their congregations.

The results of the study, Carroll said, can help churches become aware of the attitudes toward religious involvement and church of Gen-Xers as well as the other groups.

"Churches have to find a way of encouraging a greater sense of commitment, longer staying power, and offer more direction," Carroll said.



My granddaughter, Eleni Aman, age 3, received a Valentine helium balloon. As they went into their home her mother cautioned her not to let go of the balloon or it would go up in the sky, and she could never get it back. She said, "That's okay. Then Jesus can have it."

*Barb Gonzalez
Watertown, S.D.*

Top five institutions with public confidence in 1997



Based on telephone interviews with a national sample of 1,000, with a plus or minus three percentage points margin of error.

[*Emerging Trends*, September 1997]

Regular church attendance boosts immune systems

Attending religious services regularly has the power to boost the immune system and lower levels of a bad blood protein in people over age 65, Duke University researchers have found.

"Those who go to church or synagogue regularly are physically healthier, mentally healthier, and they have healthier immune systems," said Harold Koenig, a Duke University psychiatrist.

The researchers said that drawing, measuring, and testing the blood levels of study participants for the presence of an undesirable immune system protein called interleukin-6 (IL-6) helped them determine the benefits of worship on the health of older adults. IL-6 is linked to a number of age-related diseases and substances that regulate the immune system.

Health benefits were most evident in participants who attended religious services at least twice a week. Researchers said the positive results linked to worship remained even when they accounted for such factors as age, chronic illnesses, the ability to perform routine tasks, and depression. Study subjects who didn't follow the same worship regime didn't benefit from the positive results.

Many are attending, few are active

Church attendance has remained virtually unchanged in the past five years.

The mean number of adults attending a Protestant church on a typical Sunday is 100—an insignificant change from the 102 average in 1992. Black churches, with an average weekly attendance of about 150 adults, tend to be larger than white churches, with a mean attendance of 89 adults.

There are an estimated 324,000 Protestant churches in the United States. Applying the average weekly attendance figure to the number of Protestant churches, this result is an estimate of 32 million adults attending Protestant churches in any given week.

Despite church leaders' efforts to integrate spiritual efforts into people's daily experience, involvement in ministry remains low. According to pastors, only about four out of every 10 adults who attend worship are active in the church's ministry efforts. Just one out of every three churches claims that at least half of the congregation participate in active ministry.

[Barna Research Group, Oct. 30, 1997]



In brief

Ten years ago the fourth most worrisome fear among younger teenagers was that their parents might die. Now that concern has jumped to number one on the list of fears with **65 percent of teens surveyed saying they worried about the possibility of losing their mom or dad.**

[*Jr. High Ministry*, Oct./Nov. 1997, quoted in *Current Thoughts & Trends*, December 1997]

Less than 50 percent of U.S. Christians say the most important aspect of Christmas is Jesus' birth. Of those surveyed by Barna, 88 percent classified themselves as Christians, but only 37 percent considered Christ's birth the most significant part of Christmas. Forty-four percent rated family time as most important.

[*Pastor's Weekly Briefing*, Dec. 13, 1996, quoted in *Current Thoughts & Trends* December 1997]

Of the 50.5 million people who die each year, only 19.4 are Christians. Of the 31.1 million who aren't, some 12.5 million have never even heard the gospel.

[Monday Morning Reality Check Sept. 8, 1997, quoted in *Current Thoughts & Trends*, November 1997]

Russian church exerts minimal influence on believers

Although the Russian Orthodox Church remains the dominant faith among Russians, it exerts minimal influence on the values and behavior of young believers.

According to sociologist Susan Goodrich Lehmann, although half of young Russians consider themselves

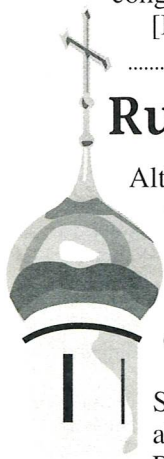
religious, few attend church regularly after they marry because church-sponsored family activities, such as Sunday school, do not exist.

Lehmann's findings were based on a survey of 3,400 Russians aged 17 to 32.

In the survey, Lehmann said she found that only 13 percent said they both believe in and actively observe religious rituals. Another 37 percent

believe in religion but do not take part in rituals. The rest reported being non-religious.

Among Orthodox believers, Lehmann said 26 percent said they never attend church, and 54 percent said they attend only for family celebrations or on religious holidays.



To place an announcement, call 414/256-3231; FAX, 414/256-3899; <nl@sab.wels.net> Deadline is six weeks before publication date.

CHANGE IN MINISTRY

Pastors:

Blumer, Steven P., from St. Stephen, Beaver Dam, Wis., to SE Orlando exp., Orlando, Fla.
Falck, Mark H., to St. Luke, Grand Rapids, Minn.
Fleming, James S., from Zion's, Mission, S.D., to Farmington, N.M.
Hein, David L., from St. Matthew, Oconomowoc, Wis., to Mt. Lebanon, Milwaukee, Wis.
Kirchner, William C., from Grace, Ringle, Wis., to Urban Mission Center, Milwaukee, Wis.
Korth, Craig R., from Calvary, Eaton Rapids, Mich., to Trinity, Wabeno, Wis.
Nitz, Michael H., from St. Paul, Columbus, Ohio, to Peoria, Ariz. exp.
Rixe, Rodney H., from Rockwood, Manitowoc, Wis., to Trinity, Hoskins, Neb.
Schaumberg, Glen A., from St. Matthew, Niles, Ill., to Trinity, Waukesha, Wis.
Stellick, John E., from Zion, Winthrop, Minn., to Trinity, Crete, Ill.
Weber, Richard F., to Redeemer, Mandan, N.D.
Zessin, Larry I., from Grace, Oshkosh, Wis., to St. Peter, Sturgeon Bay, Wis.
Ziebell, William W., to Christ, Marshall, Minn.

ANNIVERSARIES

Casa Grande, Ariz.—Grace (50). Feb. 1. Service 4 PM; refreshments follow. 1805 E Sierra Pkwy, Casa Grande AZ 85222; 520/836-8911.
Watertown, Wis.—St. Luke (150). Celebration services at 7:45 and 10:15 AM every third Sunday from January to June. Dinner, June 21. 1501 S Third St, Watertown WI 53094; 920/261-2120.
Greenfield, Wis.—St. Jacobi (125). Feb. 22-23, Mar. 29-30, and April 19-20. Sunday services, 8:15 and 10:45 AM, Monday, 7 PM. 8605 W Forest Home Ave, Greenfield WI 53228; 414/425-3030.
Helenville, Wis.—St. Peter (150). June 14—confirmation reunion. Services, 8 and 9:45 AM; catered dinner follows. Aug. 23—services, 8 and 9:45 AM; old-time picnic follows. Oct. 25—services, 8 and 10:15 AM, 3:30 PM. N4678 S Helenville Rd, Helenville WI 53137; 920/674-3307.

COMING EVENTS

Concert—Contemporary Christian concert featuring Jubilate, Xaris, Trio, a children's choir, and Inspiration. 1:30 PM, Feb. 1. Fairview, 137 N 66 St, Milwaukee WI 53213; Sue Hahm, 414/797-0695.
Martin Luther College 1998 choir tour—Contact MLC, 507/354-8221
 Feb. 20—St. John, Lake City, Minn.
 Feb. 21—St. John, Montello, Wis.; David's Star, Jackson, Wis.
 Feb. 22—Good Shepherd, West Bend, Wis.; Bethany, Ft. Atkinson, Wis.
 Feb. 23—St. Matthew, Janesville, Wis.
 Feb. 24—Mt. Olive, Appleton, Wis.
 Feb. 25—First German, Manitowoc, Wis.
 Feb. 26—St. Paul, Wisconsin Rapids, Wis.
 Feb. 27—St. Mark, Watertown, Wis.
 Feb. 28—St. John, Wauwatosa, Wis.

Bulletin BOARD & NOTICES

Regional campus rallies—Information will be mailed six weeks prior to each rally. Karen Marshall, 414/256-3279 or Dan Heins, 507/437-6948. **San Antonio, Tex.**—Feb. 20-22, **Minneapolis**—Mar. 27-29, **Philadelphia**—Apr. 17-19, **Phoenix**—Apr. 17-19, **Atlanta**—Apr. 24-26, **Pullman, Wash.**—May 1-3

Women's retreat—Christian Women Today retreat. Mar. 20-22. Holiday Inn Sunspree Resort, Oconomowoc, Wis. Jan Kneser, 414/781-1955.

Women's retreat—March 20-22. Holiday Inn, Manitowoc, Wis. Hosted by Eternal Love, Appleton, Wis. Karen McVey, 920/749-2823.

Women's retreat—Today's Christian Women's retreat. Mar. 27-29. Lansing Sheraton Hotel, Lansing, Mich. Laurie, 248/391-1133.

Women's retreat—Spiritual renewal weekend for women. Apr. 17-19. Rochester, Minn. Bev, 507/931-1866.

Handbell festivals—Northeast region—Apr. 18-19 at Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis.; Southeast region—Apr. 18-19 at Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills, Wis.; Western region—Mar. 28-29 at West LHS, Plymouth, Minn. Cheryl Diener, 223 W Badger St, Waupaca WI 54981; 715/258-7203.

Holy Land tour—11-day tour of Israel and Jordan. June 10-20. Cost: \$2,395. Registration deadline: March 15. Pastor Michael Dietz, 920/435-7970.

Luther tour—Tour Lutherland. June 27-July 10. Pastor James and Cheryl Diener, 213 W Badger St, Waupaca WI 54981; 715/258-7203; FAX, 715/258-0616; <jimdiener@juno.com>

Regional youth rallies—Wheaton College, Wheaton, Ill.—July 28-31. Michael Turriff, 414/547-6720. **Star of Bethlehem, Santa Maria, Calif.**—June 24-27. Michael Schultz, 520/774-8811. **Kellogg Center, Lansing, Mich.**—June 30-July 2. Paul Lindloff, 517/845-2600. **Disney World Swan, Orlando, Fla.**—July 2-5. Richard Warnecke, 907/784-1455. **South Dakota School of Mines, Rapid City, S.D.**—July 13-16. Pam and Jeff Kolb, 605/244-5908.

Course—Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). 4 week, 110 hour intensive. Offered summer 1998. Tom Hunter, MLC, 1995 Luther Ct, New Ulm MN 56073; 1-800-686-4142; FAX, 507/223-9109; <huntertrn@mlc-wels.edu>

Special education seminar—Special Ministries in Lutheran Education (SMILE '98) religious training seminar, July 24-26 at Holiday Inn West, Madison, Wis. Bruce Cuppan, 920/929-4232.

Alcoholic awareness retreat—For recovering alcoholics and family members. Apr. 24-26. Wonderland Camp and Conference Center, Wis. John Cook, Wisconsin Lutheran Christian Counseling, 6800 N 76 St, Milwaukee WI 53223; 414/353-5005; <wlcfs@execpc.com>

NEEDED

Artwork—for 12th annual Youth Art Month, March 8-29, at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee. Open to all WELS students (grades pre-K through 12) in public and parochial schools, including those in foreign countries. Deadline: Feb. 21. 414/443-8873.

AVAILABLE

Stairclimber—battery powered stairclimber with wheel chair and charger. St. John, Sturgeon Bay, Wis.; 414/743-5343; <stjohns@mail.doorcounty-wi.com>

School desks—good condition, free. Christ the King, Palatine, Ill., 847/358-0230.

Sunday school supplies—Life in Christ series. Free for cost of shipping. Mt. Olive, Las Vegas, 702/891-8998; <cztheday@ix.netcom.com>

Electronic organ—Baldwin. Two keyboard with detached speaker. Free for cost of shipping. Grace, Columbia, Mo. Don Schuster, 573/442-9131.

Index—for WELS Connection videos. Lists videos alphabetically, by date, and by category. CCFS, 1-800-827-2237.

Organ—1982 Baldwin. Two manuals, AGO pedal board, chimes, harp, transposer, 38 stops, 4 presets. Self-contained or can add speakers. \$2,800. Ruth Cochrane, 3549 Forest Park Rd, Springfield TN 37172; 615/382-7467.

Life issues materials—Pro-life catalog available on-line at <www.wels.net/wlfl/catalog/> or in print. Durable power of attorney for health care documents, a Christian version to help state your medical directives. Free. Include state where you live as documents differ by state. Both available from WELS Lutherans for Life, 2949 N Mayfair Rd, Ste 309, Milwaukee WI 53222; 414/774-1331; <welslutherans.forlife@wlfl.wels.net>

NAMES WANTED

Memphis, Tenn.—Names and addresses of former members of Gloria Dei for 25th anniversary celebration on June 21. Don Schuppe, 6448 Wynfrey Place, Memphis TN 38120; 901/747-2014; <dfstr@aol.com>

Denver, Colo.—Name, address, year confirmed, and years attended at Zion school for 30th anniversary celebration on Apr. 25. L. Merklinger, c/o Zion, 2600 S Wadsworth Blvd, Denver CO 80227; 303/985-2334; FAX, 303/985-2466; <ZionLuth@ix.netcom.com>

Hot Springs Village, Ark.—A.W. Schupmann, 9 Meseta Pl, Hot Springs Village AR 71909; 501/922-4125.

Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minn.—WELS/ELS home-schoolers. Susan Mueller, 1776 Holton St, St. Paul MN 55113; 612/646-2600; FAX, 612/646-3311; <mueller-4@juno.com>

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Temecula, Calif.—Christ the Vine. Worship at Nicolas Valley Elementary School, 39600 N Gen. Kearney Rd, Temecula CA 92591. Mailing address: 31351 Britton Cir, Temecula CA 92591. Pastor's phone, 909/506-5484; office, 909/699-8463; FAX, 909/695-4107.

POSITION AVAILABLE

Faculty positions at Bethany Lutheran College (ELS), Mankato, Minn., are available for the 1998-99 academic year.

Mathematics—Instruct mathematics classes, coordinate and coach the mathematics team, supervise mathematics lab, and academic advising.

Literature—Instruct classes and academic advising.

Communications—Teach communication classes and serve as advisor for extracurricular communication activities. Help implement the communication major to begin in the fall of 1999 and serve as academic advisor.

Master's degree required; Ph.D. or a willingness to pursue terminal degree desired.

Send nominations or applications (include resume, transcript information and three letters of recommendation) by March 1 to Ronald Younge, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Bethany Lutheran College, 734 Marsh St, Mankato MN 56001.

Anonymous valentines

Karl R. Gurgel

Did you ever get an anonymous valentine? It may be the purest kind. There's nothing to be gained by the one sending it. So often we only give to get. "What's in it for me?" is the question often asked before doing anything for someone else. But an anonymous valentine doesn't ask that question. It seeks nothing in return. It is only offering a fond, heartfelt wish.

For eight years someone sent me an anonymous valentine. To this day I don't know who it was. It didn't come from my wife, though she's not concerned about it.

It was a valentine that, rather than coming in February each year, arrived in September. It began when I enrolled at Northwestern Prep in Watertown, preparing to become a pastor. It continued until the year I graduated from Northwestern College. This valentine paid for my education.

That's quite a valentine—eight years of educational expense marked "Paid in full." I still don't know who sent it. If he or she is reading this, I again say, "Thanks," as my thank you notes did years ago.

But why do I call this act of kindness and generosity a valentine? It didn't come in February. The person may not even have known who I was. But it was a valentine nonetheless, for whoever sent it knew I was preparing for the public ministry. They wanted to make it possible for someone to tell the greatest love story ever told, the love of Jesus for every one of us.

Can you send this kind of valentine to someone? Oh, you may not be able to pay entirely for the educational expenses of someone preparing for the ministry. But just a valentine, a note of encouragement, for someone you know preparing for the

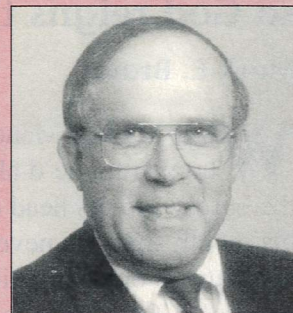
ministry would be appreciated. This time of year, between Christmas and Easter, as I recall, is not an easy time for students away from home.

Maybe you would like to make your valentine a monetary one. Might I suggest you assist a student you know with expenses? Or, encourage the members of your congregation to establish and support a scholarship fund for young people preparing for the public ministry. You can also send such valentines right to the Synod's Scholarship Fund, which assists students preparing to serve their Savior full-time.

And there is a critical need for ministerial students. Right now there are about 80 pastoral vacancies. We are using emergency teachers to fully staff a number of schools. A valentine might be encouraging someone to prepare for the public ministry.

An anonymous valentine once touched my life. It was heaven-sent, encouraging me in my preparation for the ministry. In addition to valentines like that, might I also suggest sending a valentine, a card of appreciation, to your pastors and teachers, thanking them for sharing with you the story of our Savior's love?

God's valentine wasn't anonymous. And it had your and my name and the names of all human beings written on it. In seeking to let others know what God has already done for them, you and I can share the love of Jesus with them. We can also send valentines, even anonymous ones, to those who are serving—or preparing to serve—others with the love of Jesus. Isn't that what God's love was meant to do, encourage us and others?



Karl R. Gurgel is the president of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Might I suggest sending a valentine, a card of appreciation, to your pastors and teachers, thanking them for sharing with you the story of our Savior's love?

WELS Student Assistance Fund,
2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398

Go ahead! Be humble!

Godly humility enables us to take ourselves off the throne of our lives, so God reigns there instead.

Mark E. Braun

When Mickey Mantle hit a home run, he'd always circle the bases with his head down and his mouth shut. He never wanted to show up an opposing pitcher.

It's the '90s now: the "Mickey mentality" is out, the "Deion demeanor" in. Deion Sanders woofs at other players and struts in front of fans. Millions of kids who watch him want to be just like him.

"Go ahead! Be great! Show your stuff! You're number one!" Does anybody say "Be humble" anymore? James does.

You can be honest with yourself

It's not easy admitting we have dirty hands. One of Satan's cleverest tricks is to assure us religion's all right, but it's best confined to some harmless, Sunday morning cubicle. We're our own worst enemies when we insist we need not run away from evil altogether, but can "handle" the weaknesses and cravings of our hearts.

We hide behind masks—looks, career, lifestyle—to convince others and ourselves we're in control of our lives. Godly humility allows

us—compels us—to be honest with ourselves. We don't deserve God's love. We can't resist our sinful urges. Though we sing, "Heaven is my home," we are still much too eager to accommodate ourselves to this wicked world.

**To align ourselves with God
means to run away
from Satan.**

You will be blessed by the Lord

But if we finally become honest with ourselves, how can we be sure God will accept us? "Come near to God and he will come near to you," James wrote (4:8). Through the blood of Jesus it's never too late. God works repentance in sinners' hearts, and he never turns repentant sinners away.

"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil" (4:7). To align ourselves with God means to run away from Satan. Standing on God's side, we find out the devil's temptations

aren't irresistible and sin isn't inevitable. Then, we won't be fleeing from Satan, but he'll be fleeing from us.

Godly humility enables us to take

ourselves off the throne of our lives, so God reigns there instead. We receive so many blessings from our Lord: acceptance, pardon, love, peace of mind. We find who we really are in him.

You will be helpful to your neighbor

When James asks, "Who are you to judge your neighbor?" (4:12) he sounds like his big brother: "Do not judge, or you too will be judged (Matthew 7:1). Unfortunately, both are often misunderstood. Jesus also told us to show our brother his fault (Matthew 18:15). James later wrote, "Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death" (5:20). We don't help our neighbor if we let his impenitence condemn him to hell.

What James and Jesus forbid is judging other people's hearts. Such judging goes beyond criticizing sin to destroying another's hope. Such judging brings others down to make us feel bigger.

Godly humility means we are helpful to our neighbor by defending him, speaking well of him, and taking his words and actions in the kindest possible way.

Mark E. Braun is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee.

real faith for real life
james

Would you mind participating in a poll?

Walter F. Beckmann

Someone holding a clipboard approaches you in a shopping mall and politely inquires, "Could you spare a few minutes to participate in an opinion poll?" In the mail you receive a set of forms to fill out to become a significant statistic in a sociological survey. A phone number flashes across the bottom of the TV screen urging you to register your point of view on a controversial news issue.

People seem interested in survey results. Anytime I browse through magazines, I find poll results arranged in neat categories complete with the percentage of people who fall into each category.

I learned from one poll that 71 percent don't believe there are absolute truths about anything. Ironically, people who don't believe in absolute truths often turn to poll results to find the truths they live by. They feel that public opinion should determine what's morally right or wrong.

Have you ever wondered how reliable polls really are and how accurately they reflect what people believe? The other day I answered a phone call and was asked to participate in a poll to determine how people feel about abortion. The first question was, "Do you favor abortion on demand?" That was easy—"No!"

The next question was more complicated, "Are you opposed to all abortions?" While trying to explain that there could be extreme conditions under which . . ., I was told my answer would be listed as "No."

Before I could catch my breath we were on the third question, "Are you opposed to abortions in cases of incest, rape, or to save the life of a mother?" I started to explain that those are three unrelated situations, that trying to save a mother's life was quite

different from killing a baby because his parents are close relatives. The pollster said she'd list me as "Undecided" and thanked me for participating. As I tried to insist that I was very decided but that the question was poorly worded, the operator informed me that if I wished to make a phone call, I would first have to hang up and then redial.

I realized that the pollster hadn't been interested in my opinion, only in the number of calls she could claim she had made. I think she had even been finessing my answers to fit into one of her categories.

I'm not opposed to polls and surveys. They can help us learn what people are thinking about a certain issue or if they feel they have special needs that aren't being addressed. I'm sure many polls are sincere attempts to learn what those feelings and needs really are.

But when it comes to most moral issues and matters of Christian doctrine there are absolute truths. God has revealed them in his Word, which Jesus told us is truth. We don't need polls to answer questions like, "Is sex outside of marriage morally wrong?" or "Is faith in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ the world's only hope of salvation?" God has answered those questions with an emphatic "Yes!" With these issues opinion polls can never determine the truth. They can only reveal how confused sinful beings can become and how much they need God's truth to save them for eternity and to guide their thoughts, words, and actions here in time.

Walter Beckmann is pastor at Grace, Falls Church, Virginia.

*There
are absolute
truths. God
has revealed
them to us in
his Word.*

Death and resurrection

John F. Brug

When Lazarus died, Jesus said, "Lazarus has fallen asleep."

Between death and resurrection is the soul conscious or is it asleep?

As soon as people die, their souls go directly to heaven or hell. In several places the Bible speaks of conscious reactions of souls in hell or heaven. The rich man is afraid that his brothers will join him in hell (Luke 16:27,28). Jesus descended to hell to proclaim his victory to the spirits of those who had died in the flood (1 Peter 3:19,20). Jesus promised the repentant thief that he would be with him in Paradise "today" (Luke 23:43). The souls of the martyrs live and rule with Christ in heaven (Revelation 20:5) and pray for his justice to come upon the earth (Revelation 6:10).

When the Bible speaks of death as "sleep," it refers primarily to the body. Sometimes, death is called "sleep" in a negative sense: the dead can no longer participate in earthly activities (Psalm 76:5). The main point of comparison, however, is positive: just as we awake each morning from sleep, our body will awake from the grave on the morning of the resurrection. "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2).

Luther and other writers sometimes spoke of a rest or sleep for the soul after death. They were stressing that those who have departed in faith now enjoy rest from the toil of this life. The point of comparison was rest, not unconsciousness.

It is better, however, not to refer to sleep of the soul. Today, false teachers who deny the continued existence of the soul after death use the term "soul-sleep" to describe the temporary dissolving of the soul, which they believe will be re-created on the last day. Since "soul-sleep" is used to mean "soul-death," we best avoid the term altogether.

When the Bible speaks of death as "sleep," it refers primarily to the body.

I understand that 1 Corinthians 15:35-41, which speaks of different degrees of glory in the sun, moon, and stars, is speaking about the resurrected body. But how do I respond to Mormon friends who use the passage to support three levels of heaven?

The context of 1 Corinthians 15:35-44 clearly shows that Paul is not talking about different levels of heaven or degrees of glory in heaven in this passage, but about the difference between the weak body we have during this earthly life and the glorious body we will have in heaven after the resurrection. This is apparent in verses 42-44: "So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power." It is, then, invalid to use 1 Corinthians 15:40,41 to demon-

strate degrees of glory in heaven or different levels of heaven.

Paul does, however, speak of a "third heaven" in 2 Corinthians 12:2. He apparently uses this term to distinguish the home of God and all the saints and angels (the third heaven) from the heavens where the birds fly and the heavens where the stars and galaxies circle.

In 1 Corinthians 3:12-15, Paul speaks of differences of reward in heaven that have a relationship to a person's faithfulness while on this earth. Jesus also refers to this in Luke 19:11-27 and Matthew 19:28-30. These different rewards, which sometimes are called "degrees of glory," are not earned nor deserved, but are rewards of grace. This is clear from Jesus' parable in Matthew 20:1-16.

John Brug is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon.

Send questions to Your question, please, Northwestern Lutheran, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; <nl@sab.wels.net>

In NL, [When Pastor leaves. . . , Aug. '97] it was noted that there are not enough pastoral candidates to fill vacancies existing in synod, and that this may continue for years. There are at least two ways the shortage may be alleviated.

One way is already used in some churches. Individuals who exhibit pastoral characteristics, although not having the theological training we expect of pastors, can be called for special kinds of ministries.

The second is also used. I refer to using elders to conduct services, including distributing communion. The principal objection is: "We've never done that!" But if one looks at the doctrine of the call carefully, there can be no doctrinal objections to this practice.

Whatever is done, however, it must be done "decently and in order," and with the full approval of the members. This last requirement may dictate a long period of congregational study on the biblical basis for such "radical" innovations.

*Richard H. Engelmann
Cincinnati, Ohio*

Thank you for your series on family planning by Wayne Mueller. It was a pleasure to read articles reflective of the serious commitment family planning demands. His articles bring out the joys and responsibilities awarded to us by God through our children. May I suggest that couples seeking to commit their lives to the Lord incorporate all the principles Pastor Mueller effectively described: dedication, planning, commitment, communication, self-control, trust,

and constant prayer. This method of natural family planning keeps God in the plan.

*Brenda Griffith
Carlsbad, California*

Beginning with the heart-touching photo on the cover of your December issue, I thoroughly enjoyed it all. It was such a blessing to receive *Northwestern Lutheran*. I have reread several of the articles a number of times. Pastor Eich's article on St. Nicholas is the best summary of that subject I've ever seen, and I would love to make copies of it and pass it out to sailors and Marines on my ship. We are stationed in Yokosuka, Japan, but spend more than half our time gone to sea. No one here has access to your magazine. May God richly bless all your efforts on his behalf.

*Timothy Sims
Yokosuka, Japan*

I enjoyed Prof. Schroeder's living tribute to my dad. While his work in classroom and in print are a matter of record now, his remembrances by family and friends served him well.

Allow me a brief footnote. Not too long before he retired from active teaching, Dad had a mild heart attack. He experienced some shortness of breath, clamminess, and chest pain on his way to a classroom lecture. Still he gave his lecture and later commented to Mom that he was tired out.

During the following week he had a routine medical exam. His EKG showed the telltale tracings of a heart attack. Somewhat sheepishly Dad explained that he knew when it had happened and then only shared the event with the doctor and my mom.

I tried to chide Dad about the consequences of ignoring classic heart attack symptoms and warned that he could have died in his classroom. To which his reply was, "but what a way to go." Such was his love for his students. Such was his love for his Lord.

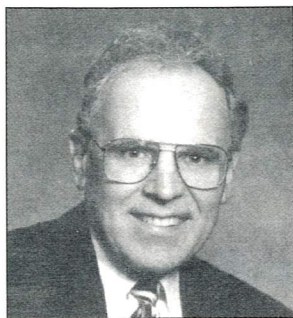
*Chris Heise (nee Fredrich)
Tempe, Arizona*

Through my Bible in 3 years

March 1998

1. Genesis 6
2. Gen. 7:1—8:19
3. Gen. 8:20—9:29
4. Gen. 10:1—11:9
5. Gen. 11:10—13:4
6. Gen. 13:5—14:24
7. Gen. 15
8. Gen. 16, 17
9. Gen. 18
10. Gen. 19
11. Gen. 20:1—21:21
12. Gen. 21:22—22:24
13. Gen. 23
14. Gen. 24:1-60
15. Gen. 24:61—25:34
16. Gen. 26
17. Luke 9:57—10:12
18. Lk. 10:13-24
19. Lk. 10:25-42
20. Lk. 11:1-13
21. Lk. 11:14-36
22. Lk. 11:37-52
23. Lk. 11:53—12:12
24. Lk. 12:13-34
25. Lk. 12:35-39
26. Lk. 13:1-17
27. Lk. 13:18-35
28. Lk. 14:1-24
29. Lk. 14:25-35
30. Lk. 15
31. Lk. 16:1-31

MOVIEGUIDE



Gary P. Baumler is editor of Northwestern Lutheran and WELS Director of Communications.

Movies have degenerated at an alarming rate. Baehr has taken positive steps to counter the decline.

From time to time someone has asked whether we would consider publishing movie ratings. We have shied from doing so, but not because we didn't see value in it for our readers, particularly families.

Now something has surfaced that is more timely and in some ways better than we could provide. It is MOVIEGUIDE, published by Dr. Ted Baehr, advocate for family-friendly movies and TV programs.

According to journalist Dan Wooding of "Assist Communications," Baehr sees an entertainment industry that "uses its power to convince millions all over the world that

- deviance is normal;
- moral anarchy is fashionable;
- relationships are primarily self-serving;
- violence and sex are without consequences;
- healthy family relationships are not achievable;
- advocates for business, the military, and patriotism are enemies;
- the Church and clergy represent aberrational and outdated values."

Says Baehr: "It is nearly impossible to underestimate the influential power of film and television. . . . Its product is so pervasive that the average American teenager spends twice as much time watching the screen as going to school." And he concludes: "The raging river of films and television programming has chaotically eroded societal quality in America and . . . all around the world."

From the time that Clark Gable dared to say the forbidden "D _ _ n" in *Gone with the Wind*, movies have degenerated at an alarming rate. Baehr has taken positive steps to counter the decline by, among other things, giving "Teddy Bear" awards to the best family-friendly movies and TV programs, and publishing MOVIEGUIDE.

Baehr has a clear understanding of Christian moral issues and reveals that

understanding in his guide. He doesn't preach, but he identifies the content of a movie that may have questionable moral value and, contrariwise, that which has redeeming value. He prints reviews that pay attention to moral issues and how the movies present them.

Discerning Christian readers will have ample information to decide whether to see a movie, or allow their children to see a movie. They will know enough to talk through important issues among the family. They will not have the excuse that they don't know what is in the movie. Here is a tool worth using.

Baehr gives the movie industry's rating and then offers his own rating system. His ratings range from "Exemplary" to "Good" to "Caution" to "Evil." He leaves you to draw your own conclusions about how to use those ratings.

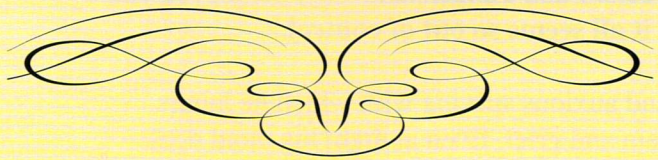
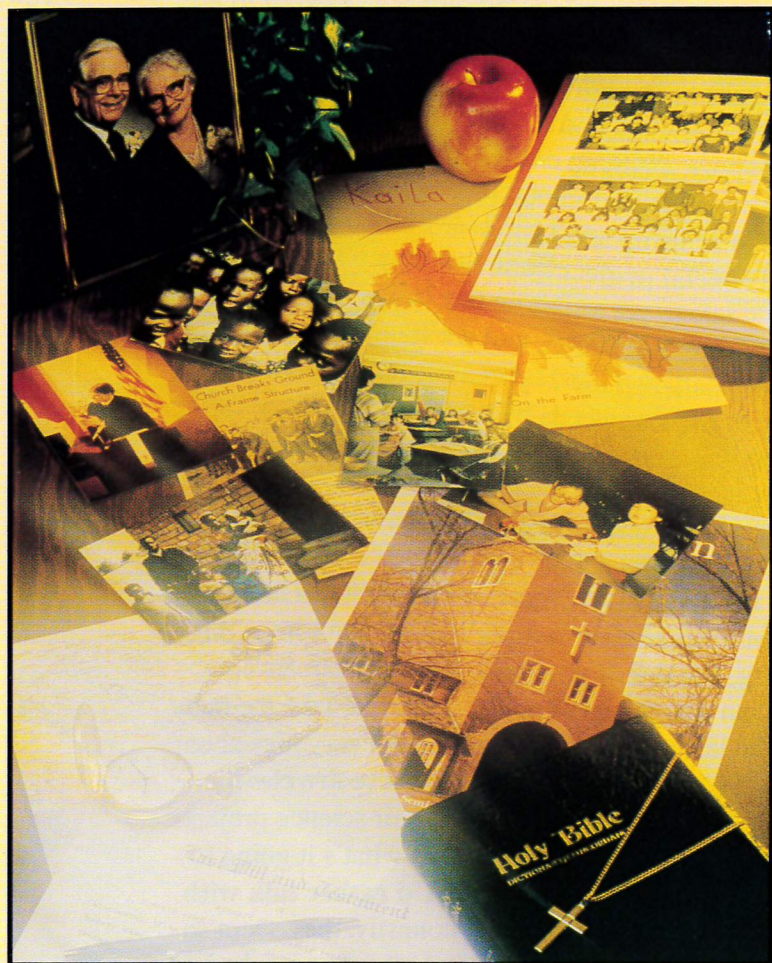
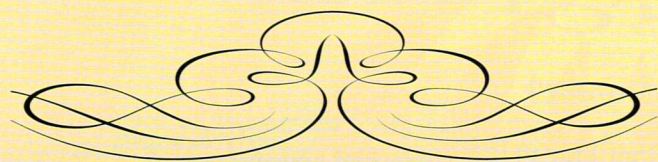
Regular readers of *Northwestern Lutheran* will see this endorsement of MOVIEGUIDE as a departure from our norm. Our usual policy is to promote WELS publications or others that we know are in full agreement with the Bible and WELS' teachings. I cannot guarantee that everything in MOVIEGUIDE (it contains feature articles too) meets the usual criteria. You will need to read it with a critical eye.

However, if you agree—as I do—with Baehr's assessment of how the entertainment industry is using its power, you'll be glad to see what he is doing. And you can use the information he gives to apply in your faith life.

Gary P. Baumler

For information about
MOVIEGUIDE:
2510 G Las Posa Road,
Suite 502
Camarillo CA 93010
<movieguide.christcom.net>

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Out of Control

David Danford

“So, I am driving along Center Street, four kids in the car, all of them trying to tell me stuff which, by the way, doesn’t sound very important compared to my problems, but the **youngest is starting to cry**, and I can’t understand why she’s crying, because two of the others are yelling, but I have to find out about that later, because they might call me back in to work this afternoon, and if they do, **what about supper**, because the last time the kids started supper, well you don’t want to know, but the drain in the kitchen hasn’t been the same since, and I hope I don’t have to call the plumber, because who knows when he’d show up and I can’t stay home and wait, **because when am I going to get that special project done** that they really, really wanted done last week, which I worked late to get a start on day before yesterday (because Monday the boss said, we’re downsizing soon, and we’ll only need those workers with true drive and initiative to challenge the 21st century), instead of going shopping for the birthday gift that one of the kids needs by two days from now for the party that he may walk five miles to go to because **I don’t know who’s going to drive him**, scheduled right when soccer practice begins for the two oldest kids, and the crazy coach is threatening to kick them off the team if they miss again, but it’s the only time I can run errands for the next week and a half, and maybe I shouldn’t really be driving anywhere because **the car needed the oil changed sometime in late 1994** and now it makes this funny sound that it never used to make before, and I hope this doesn’t mean it’s going to stop working, because if you think I’ve got troubles now, remember the last time the car didn’t run was the day I took off work to take the baby in for shots, and we had to cancel at the last minute, and they weren’t very nice about that, but that’s nothing compared to . . . you know, **I don’t think there are clean clothes for the kids for tomorrow**, and they all want help with their science projects, which are due in a week and a half, and they don’t have a clue, so what’s it going to be: school in the nude or put off the projects another night, and **I’d rather talk with them than do their laundry**, but they can watch TV instead, honestly, they seem so distant these past months or has it been years. I don’t understand why, but maybe you can help me make sense of it all because **it all seems so out of control**.”

“What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun? All his days his work is pain and grief. Even at night his mind does not rest. This too is meaningless” (Ecclesiastes 2:22,23). God’s Word tells us that meaning comes not from making sense of life on its own terms, but in knowing how our times and troubles shrink to insignificance when we are secure in our salvation. Salvation comes not from figuring out how to accomplish everything expected of us here on earth, but from knowing through faith that the one truly important thing that we need has already been done for us—the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Whenever that horrible, out-of-control feeling comes along, recall that the answer is in God’s Word. Open your Bible. Come and worship. Bring the kids.

Dave Danford is a member at Good Shepherd, Omaha, Nebraska.